

# WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

*Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Application made for Second Class Entry at the N. Y. Post Office.*

No. 172.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 2, 1906.

Price 5 Cents.

## YOUNG WILD WEST AND "MONTANA MOSE";

### OR, ARIETTA'S MESSENGER OF DEATH.

*By AN OLD SCOUT.*



"What did you give me to drink?" cried Mountain Mose. "Coffee," answered Arietta. The villain staggered back and dropped the cup. "You have poisoned me." Wild saw that the drug had worked. The simple fellow stood still in mute surprise.



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## YOUNG WILD WEST AND "MONTANA MOSE"

OR,

### Arietta's Messenger of Death.

**By 'AN OLD SCOUT'**

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE "FIGHTING BOB-CAT" GETS DOWNED.

"Look out there! Here I come! I'm Montana Mose, ther fightin' bob-cat from ther North Woods! I'm a regular fire-eater when I git started, an' anyone as goes ag'in me has got ter go down. Line up there, you thirsty galoots; I'm goin' ter treat yer ter fire-water."

The speaker was a rough, burly-looking man attired in a well-worn suit of clothes, such as is usually to be seen on miners and the men who rough it in the wild parts of the great West.

The evil look in his small, gray eyes and the scraggy beard on his face made him look anything but pleasing, and the manner in which he spoke as he entered the shanty tavern at Skull Bone, Arizona, indicated that he was something of importance, and that he wanted everybody to know it.

It was near the close of a hot day, and many of the miners of Skull Bone, which was a camp of something like seventy in population, had stopped on their way from work to "liquor up" before going to supper.

The tavern was not the only drinking-place in the camp, but it had the name of being the most respectable, and hence those who patronized it were mostly honest and trustworthy men.

A mining camp without drinking saloons would be like a turkey without cranberry sauce. Ninety per cent of the men who flock to the "diggings" drink because they think it is necessary they should.

But that has nothing to do with our story, so we will proceed.

The stranger who called himself Montana Mose pushed up to the little bar, shoving a couple of miners aside as he did so, and, slamming his fist upon it with a bang, yelled out:

"I'm Montana Mose, I say! Give us all some fluid lightnin'!"

There were just ten persons in the place at the time.

Three of them were bound to attract more than ordinary attention from the fact that they were attired in fancy hunting-suits of buckskin which appeared to be new, and they were handsome and dashing in appearance.

Two of the three had not reached the age of twenty-one, but they were full-grown and looked as though they were perfectly capable of taking care of themselves.

The third was a man of thirty, who was tall and straight as an arrow and had a wealth of black hair hanging to his shoulders and sported a mustache of the same color.

He looked to be a man who had been born and reared in the wild West and who had experienced all sorts of dangers and hardships and come out whole.

But if he looked dashing and reckless, one of the boys surely went him one better.

This boy was handsome in the extreme, and had his sombrero tipped back jauntily over a wealth of chestnut hair that hung over his shoulders.

His clear-cut features, thin lips and keen dark eyes told plainly that he was one who had a determination, and who was not afraid of anything.

This was Young Wild West, the Champion Deadshot of



the West and Prince of the Saddle, known all over the West at the time of which we write as a terror to evil-doers and a friend to those who could not help themselves.

Young Wild West was cool under any and all conditions, and his ready wit had brought him out of many tight places. He was strong, active and up to all the tricks and feats known to ordinary athletes, and he had never come out second best in any kind of a contest.

The other boy was Jim Dart, a true young Westerner and a chum of his.

The tall man with the long black hair was no other than Cheyenne Charlie, the well-known scout, who had won glory and distinction while in the government service during the Indian wars.

The three were standing near the door that led into the rear or sitting-room of the tavern when Montana Mose dismounted and burst into the place.

As they had met so many men of the type of the stranger they did not pay a great deal of attention to him until he brought his heavy fist upon the bar and ordered what he called fluid lightning for all hands.

The three had only been at the tavern a few minutes, so they were strangers there, too.

Young Wild West, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart were not only partners from a social standpoint, but also in several mining ventures, and they had just come over from Phoenix in company with Charlie's wife, Anna, and two girls bearing the names of Arietta Murdock and Eloise Gardner.

Arietta was Young Wild West's sweetheart, and Eloise expected to be the wife of Jim Dart some day when they were both of the proper age to marry.

Their Chinese servant, Hop Wah, came with them, too, but more of him later.

Our hero and his partners were waiting to be called to their supper when Montana Mose issued the invitation to drink with him.

Charlie was the only one of the three who ever imbibed anything strong, and as he had just had a drink, he did not care for any more at that particular time.

Montana Mose had an eye like a hawk, and when he noticed that the three inmates of the room who were dressed rather fancy did not step up when he gave the invitation, a scowl came over his ugly-looking face.

"Step up!" he roared. "Didn't yer all hear me say I was ther fighting bob-cat from ther North Woods? S'posin' I was ter git mad an' let some bullets fly around your ears? Step up an' wet your whistles afore I git mad."

He was looking straight at the three now, since they were the only ones who did not move forward when the invitation was given.

"I reckon I don't feel like takin' a drink jest now, stranger," Cheyenne Charlie retorted, calmly. "I don't care about s'pilin' my appetite fur supper."

"Come on, anyhow! When I asks a galoot ter drink I don't like ter be refused. You two youngsters step up,

too. You've got ter swaller a hull glass of fluid lightnin' apiece. I says it, an' when Montana Mose says a thing it has got ter go."

"You will have to excuse us, Montana Mose," said Young Wild West, looking at the rough fellow calmly. "If a person don't want to drink you shouldn't try to force him. It is mighty bad form, I think."

"What! Ho, ho, ho! Thunder! Did you grinnin' galoots hear what ther youngster says?" cried Montana Mose, showing the greatest of surprise.

He turned to the miners at the bar, and nodded his shaggy head after the fashion of a lion about to eat up his prey.

"Better be sociable, strangers," spoke up the man behind the bar. "It's customary ter drink with everyone what asks yer in these diggin's, yer know."

"Well, the custom will have to be broken this time, then," answered Young Wild West, smiling at the man.

"Custom will have ter be broken, hey? We'll see about that!" roared Montana Mose. "Bartender, jest fill me a glass chock full. That fancy-lookin' young galoot has got ter drink every drop of it, or I'll know ther reason why."

"I reckon you'll know ther reason why quick enough," remarked Cheyenne Charlie.

"Keep still, Charlie," spoke up our hero. "This is my affair now. It was yours at first, but he shifted it over to me. I'll show Mr. Montana Mose that he has made a mistake, just as I have shown others of his calibre. Bar-keeper, don't pour that liquor out!"

"It's too late now," retorted the bartender, with a grin. "I reckon you'll have ter drink it."

"Well, I reckon there ain't enough galoots in this minin' camp to make me drink it."

As Young Wild West said this he jerked out a Colt's six-shooter and showed that he was ready for business.

But this did not have any great effect on Montana Mose, though it did on the man behind the bar.

The fighting bob-cat from the North Woods, as he chose to call himself, took the glass of liquor from the counter and advanced toward our hero with it.

"Drink this or I'll pour it down your throat!" he shouted, hoarsely. "I mean jest what I say!"

Crack!

The dashing boy with the long chestnut hair fired as quick as a flash and the glass was shattered into bits, the contents flying over the burly man who was advancing with it.

A murmur of astonishment went up from the miners, while the man behind the bar reached for the shooter he kept close at hand.

"Ther first galoot what pulls a gun will be a dead man afore he kin say Jack Robinson!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, the scout.

Montana Mose stood stock still in his tracks for a moment.

He was thunderstruck.

But he was quick to recover himself.



With an oath he flung himself at the boy.

Biff!

A blow straight from the shoulder caught him on the chin and his head went back with a jolt, while he went staggering about the room trying to regain his equilibrium.

Before he succeeded in doing so Young Wild West was upon him.

Biff! Spat!

A right caught him in the pit of the stomach and a left landed on his jaw as he doubled up.

Bang!

Montana Mose fell with such force that the shanty was jarred from foundation to roof.

"I guess you was looking for a fight, Montana Mose," said Wild, calmly, as he stood over the fallen man. "I hope you're satisfied, but if you're not just say the word! I'll soon make you feel as though you had been run through a Kansas threshing machine."

At this juncture the man who owned the tavern came in.

"What's all this?" he cried.

"Ther big galoot was goin' ter make ther boy drink when he didn't want, an' ther boy shot ther glass out of his hand an' then knocked ther duff out of him," retorted the bartender, who had changed his opinion wonderfully when he saw how easy our hero handled the big "bad man."

"Well, that's all right," replied the proprietor, who was a very fair sort of man; "I reckon no one has ter take a drink when he don't want it."

Wild nodded at the speaker.

"I am glad to hear you talk that way," he said. "But your man behind the bar seemed to think that I ought to drink the whisky just because the big bluffer said I had to drink it. I have never yet met the man who could make me do what I didn't want to do, and if there is any one here who thinks he can force me to drink, just let him step out!"

No one stirred.

There was something about the manner and way of speaking of the dashing young deadshot that told them they had better let him alone.

Montana Mose now managed to get in a sitting posture, though he was too dazed to rise to his feet.

One of the miners assisted him and got him over on a bench in the corner.

Young Wild West kept a sharp eye on him, for he expected the bad man would try to shoot him as soon as he recovered sufficiently to act.

He was not mistaken.

Suddenly Montana Mose slid his hand to the holster that was hanging to his belt.

"If you pull that shooter I'll break your arm with a bullet!"

The words rang out sharp and clear from the lips of Young Wild West.

The weapon was not drawn.

"You've got me, boy!" said the villain, as he got up and walked to the bar. "I ain't goin' ter look fur any more trouble with yer—not jest now."

"I am pleased to hear that you have found your senses," was the reply. "You brought the trouble on yourself; I am sure it was not my doings."

"Do yer mind telling me who yer are?" asked Montana Mose, as he poured a drink from the bottle before him and turned his gaze full upon the boy.

"Young Wild West is my name."

"Jest give Young Wild West three cheers, boys!" cried Cheyenne Charlie. "Then I'll chuck ther fightin' bob-cat out of ther tavern!"

## CHAPTER II.

### INTRODUCING THE CHINAMAN AND ONE OF HIS TRICKS.

Every man in the tavern opened wide his mouth and a prolonged cheer went up.

There are few men, indeed, who do not admire a display of courage and skill, and it so happened that there was not one in the crowd who did not.

Montana Mose moved toward the door before the cheer died out.

He was evidently of the opinion that Cheyenne Charlie meant to make good his threat to throw him out, and as they were all against him, he considered discretion the better part of valor.

"Hold on!" called out the bartender; "yer didn't pay me fur ther drinks I served."

The fighting bob-cat tossed a gold coin on the bar.

"Keep ther change!" he cried, and then he got out in a hurry.

He had a horse outside, and, quickly mounting, he rode up the crooked roadway that was between the two rows of shanties the village contained.

Young Wild West and his partners came out on the little low stoop that was attached to the tavern.

The scout laughed heartily as he saw the man riding away.

"I reckon he didn't feel like bein' chucked out," he observed, as they went inside again.

"Not much!" retorted Jim Dart. "It seems that Wild and you are the only ones who ever have any fun with a bad man when we strike him. He is generally crushed entirely before you get a chance, but always before it comes my turn."

"Well, it wouldn't do to allow him to get the best of the pair of us, so you could have a turn, Jim," answered our hero, with a laugh.

"Oh, of course not," said Jim. "But sometimes I feel like mixing it up with those kind of fellows."

"Well, if Montana Mose attempts to pick a row with me again I will turn him over to you."



"All right, Wild."

At this juncture a Chinaman came in through the rear door.

He was only a plain, ordinary Chinaman, as far as looks went.

Really, he appeared to be one of the most innocent ones of his race, for there was a dreamy, far-away look in his eyes, and the smile that played about his yellow visage was "child-like and bland."

This was Hop Wah, the servant of Young Wild West and his friends, known by those who had come in contact with him to be one of the shrewdest of gamblers and quite an expert in the art of legerdemain.

"Horses allee fixee uppee nicee, Misler Wild," he said, as he moved over to the bar. "Me likee havee dlink tanglefoot; me got velly badee pain."

"Take a drink if you want it," replied our hero, who knew very well that he was only shamming. "But just see to it that you keep sober. You have a way of drinking too much in every place we strike where liquor is sold, and you know what I have told you so often."

"Yes, me knowee. Some day you shootee off poor Chinaman's pigtail, and then me no dare go backee to um China. Me never see gleat uncle, who um biggee mandarin, then; me feel velly solly."

A Chinaman is no stranger in a Western mining camp, so the miners in the tavern paid little attention to this one.

But when they saw him lay down the price of the drink he ordered, and then in an absent-minded way pour out a drink and shove the glass to the bartender and then raise the bottle to his lips, they could not help laughing.

"Here, you yaller heathen!" yelled the man behind the counter; "what are yer doin'?"

"Me makee a mistake," was the retort, and the look on the Celestial's face seemed to be one of genuine surprise when he put the bottle down, after first taking three or four big swallows; "me t'inkee me havee glasse in um hand."

Then, as if it would straighten out the mistake he had made, he reached over and took up the glass and swallowed the contents at a single gulp.

There was a roar of laughter at this, even the proprietor joining in.

The man serving the Chinaman alone did not laugh.

He was angered.

"I reckon you'll pay for the whole bottle now," he said. "There's lots of men around these diggin's what wouldn't drink whisky from a bottle that a yaller heathen had had to his mouth."

"Me pay; how muchee?" quickly retorted Hop.

"Well, there was jest about three dollars' worth of prime old tanglefoot in that bottle when you took hold of it."

"Me pay thlee dollee."

Hop quickly put out the money and the man took it.

"That is quite a scheme," observed Wild to his partners and the proprietor. "He asked permission to get a drink, and he has not only swallowed enough to make

three or four, but has bought the bottle. Well, I will let him go a little further before I take a hand in it."

It was evident that Hop Wah meant to go as far as he could, for he looked at the bartender, and, smiling in a very friendly way, observed:

"You puttee fullee bottle tanglefoot outee and me showee nice tlick."

"What will yer show me?" and the man looked over at his boss to see whether he wanted him to do it or not.

"Go ahead, Sam," nodded the proprietor.

"Me showee putty nicee tlick," smiled Hop.

A full bottle was set before him, and, with an innocent glance around the room, the Celestial placed the bottle he had purchased in one of the pockets his loose-fitting gown contained.

Then he pulled out a large silk handkerchief of a yellow color and placed it over the full bottle, so it was entirely concealed from view.

"Me gotte uncle in China velly bigee mandarin," Hop remarked, as he got close to the counter and looked thoughtfully at the ceiling. "My uncle likee Melican tanglefoot velly much; he dlinkee some flom bottle. He in China, tanglefoot in Melica. Velly gleat tlick me do."

He stepped back a pace, and, raising his hands, began reciting something that might have been a Chinese poem, for no one had the least idea what it was.

Then he paused and gave a nod of satisfaction.

"Allee light!" he exclaimed; "my uncle dlinkee some tanglefoot."

"What are yer tryin' ter do, anyhow?" demanded the man behind the bar in a tone of disgust.

"Me do tlick; me makee uncle in China dlinkee flom bottle under handkelchief. Bottle fullee when me puttee hankelchief over um; now um no fullee."

With that he seized the handkerchief and lifted it from the bottle.

An exclamation of astonishment went up from those of the spectators who were not aware of the Chinaman's ability to do sleight-of-hand.

Nearly a third of the contents of the bottle had disappeared!

The cork had been pulled, too, and it had simply been placed back in the neck of the bottle so it could be easily removed with the fingers.

"Lat putty nicee tlickee, so be," observed Hop, moving for the door that opened into the rear room; "me go outee an' lookee at um horses."

He was gone before the bartender had recovered from his surprise.

The proprietor stepped up and took hold of the bottle.

"Why, Sam, this is the bottle he drank from; it ain't that new full bottle yer put out!" he declared.

Wild and his partners could not help laughing.

The trick the Chinaman had done was simply to change the bottles and get away with the full one himself.

"It looks like ther old bottle, but I don't see how it kin be," was the reply of Tom. "I'll take an oath that I seen



ther heathen put that handkerchief of his over ther new bottle, an' I know that he had ther other one in his pocket."

The miners in the room were ready to swear to the same thing.

But Young Wild West and his partners knew a whole lot better.

They realized that Hop had worked it so he now had the full bottle, and that he had no doubt gone out for the purpose of getting a pull at it.

"I am not going to allow that Chinaman to get drunk," said Wild, moving over to the rear room. "He has got the full bottle, gentlemen; his hands were quicker than your eyes, that is all."

The whole crowd followed him to the door.

Wild looked out of a window before he made a move to open the door.

Standing close to a tree a couple of hundred feet away was Hop.

He had just pulled the cork from the bottle and was in the act of raising it to his lips.

As quick as a flash Young Wild West unslung his rifle.

The window was open, and without the least hesitation he placed the butt of the rifle against his shoulder.

The bottle was tipped so its contents could pour down the throat of the thirsty Celestial, while his hand gripped the neck of it.

No one realized what the dashing young deadshot meant to do but Jim and Charlie.

Crack!

The sharp report of the Winchester rang out and the bottle went flying from Hop's hands, broken into fragments.

"That is the finish of the trick, gentlemen," said Wild, calmly. "The heathen needs a little help, you see."

The miners looked at the boy in silent admiration.

It was a wonderful shot, they thought.

Few, indeed, would have taken the risk of shooting at the bottle while a person was drinking from it.

The bullet had to go exactly where it was aimed or the Chinaman would have received it in some part of his anatomy.

Hop understood it a great deal better than the citizens of Skull Bone did.

He wiped the front of his gown quickly and then ran for the shed where the horses were stalled.

"I reckon ther yaller heathen is used ter that kind of business," observed the landlord.

"Yes, he knows where the bullet came from, all right," our hero answered.

"Say!" exclaimed one of the miners; "that was ther greatest shot I ever seen made."

"Oh, that was nothing," was the retort. "I have made many better shots than that, I assure you."

Just then the bell rang for supper.

The sun was yet half an hour high, but it was later

than usual for supper to be served at the Skull Bone Tavern.

This was on account of the arrival of our friends. They had ladies with them, and that made the good wife of the landlord prepare more than usual.

"How about ther bottle of whisky, boss?" asked the bartender.

"You got three dollars, so we'll let it go at that," was the reply. "Young Wild West smashed ther bottle with a bullet, anyhow, so it kin be put in ther profit an' loss column."

"I reckon yer got ther worth of it, anyhow, when yer took in ther three dollars," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, with a grin.

"If I didn't it won't make or break me," answered the proprietor.

Wild and his partners went into the dining-room and found the girls waiting for them.

Though the wife of Cheyenne Charlie was twenty-five, they always spoke of the three as "the girls."

"So you were making a target of Hop, Wild?" said pretty Arietta, tossing her golden head and smiling at our hero, as he took his place at her side at the table.

"Why, were you looking, Et?" he asked.

"No, but we heard the report of your rifle, and we ran to the window and were just in time to see Hop brushing himself off and running for the shed. We could imagine what had happened. He had a bottle of liquor, didn't he?"

"That's right."

"And you shot it out of his hand?"

"He was drinking from it when I fired."

"Well, it serves him right. I suppose he stole the bottle?"

"Well, he managed to get it by practicing one of his sleight-of-hand tricks, but it cost him three dollars for what he drank before he went out with the bottle."

Wild then told them all about it and a laugh all around was the result.

"Hop Wah is a very comical fellow, and I don't know what we would do for a good laugh now and then if it wasn't for him," remarked the scout's wife.

"That is so," Eloise hastened to declare.

The meal was eaten with a relish, for it was the first they had been allowed the pleasure of eating in a house in three days.

There were some things about it that they could not have while camping out, though they had a very good outfit and carried provisions with them.

Our friends did not intend to remain more than a couple of days at Skull Bone.

They intended to spend the winter months in riding through the wildest parts of Arizona and New Mexico.

Young Wild West and his partners could not get along without lively, adventurous times, and the girls were inclined that way, too.

But while they went about searching for adventure they



were always on the lookout for pockets of gold or paydirt that would increase their wealth.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE ARRIVAL OF THE STAGECOACH.

"What is the crowd gathered over there for?" Young Wild West asked Proprietor Wilkens, of the Skull Bone Hotel, as he walked out upon the little stoop that ran across the front of the tavern and nodded to a point across the street and to the right.

"Oh, ther gang is out waitin' fur ther stagecoach ter come in with ther mail," was the reply. "We ain't got no regular postoffice here yet, but Joe Skinner, ther driver of ther outfit, always fetches ther mail fur ther folks here over in a bag. Ther stagecoach is due in about ten minutes now, an' Joe is generally on time. He makes a trip a week ter Phoenix an' back, an' each trip is worth more'n a hundred dollars, 'cause he charges passengers 'cordin' ter how many he has, yer know."

"I see. If he only has one passenger he must get a fifty-dollar note from him, and if he has ten he fetches them through for five dollars a head."

"Well, he never brings a passenger or takes one over fur less than ten apiece. But he never has as many as ten at one trip. If it is a slow week ther boys sees ter it that Joe's salary is kept up, 'cause we need him. There's nothin' like givin' a chance ter strangers ter come ter ther town, yer know."

"Yes, that is true. But I have been in some mining camps where they don't want strangers to come."

"Ther galoots what run sich towns must be 'way behind ther age, then."

"They are a blame sight worse than that," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, who was standing near. "Them kind of galoots is generally bad men what want things their own way."

The girls came out just then, followed by Jim Dart, so Wild informed them that the stagecoach, which came in once a week, was due, and suggested that they go over and witness the arrival.

The sun had now gone down, but it was not yet dark.

Wild knew that it was quite likely that Montana Mose would be attracted to the spot, and though he was not afraid that the villain would try to get square just then, he made up his mind to be on the lookout for him.

The party of six walked over and took up positions before the shanty that had a sign on it declaring it to be "the waiting-room for passengers for Joe Skinner's Stagecoach Line."

There were a score of women and children in the waiting crowd, and the faces of all showed that they were anxious to see the outfit come in.

Our hero scanned the gathering, and soon found that Montana Mose was there.

He was standing at the outskirts of the crowd, in company with three or four men, who, judging by their looks, were not the best citizens of Skull Bone.

They appeared to be on very friendly terms with the fighting bob-cat, too, and were unmistakably under the influence of the stuff called tanglefoot.

It did not take Wild long to notice that they were eyeing him pretty closely, and also paying a great deal of attention to his companions, especially the girls.

But they did not offer to come any closer than they were.

Just as it got dark and the stars began to come out the rattling of wheels was heard.

"Ther stagecoach is comin'!" yelled the man who kept the supply store right next to the waiting-room. "Joe is on time, as usual."

A cheer went up from the men, while the faces of the women and children lighted up.

It was hardly likely that they all expected friends, or even mail, but they were there to witness the joy of those who did when they had their expectations fulfilled.

The outfit could now be seen coming up the straight trail, but the next minute it was lost to view, owing to the bend in the single street that ran through the camp.

Just why the street had been laid out so crooked no one knew, nor did they care, for it was the way things were done usually in mining camps at the time of which we are writing.

The rumbling sounds grew nearer, the crack of a whip sounded and then the outfit came in sight once more.

"Hooray!" yelled a big miner, who was expecting his wife to arrive, and was unable to keep from giving vent to his feelings.

He was bound to show his joy now, so if he was disappointed it could not be said that he had been indifferent in the matter.

The driver put the four horses to a faster gait as he neared the waiting-room, and when the stagecoach came to a halt it did so with a jar that shook it all over, for Joe Skinner knew his business, and when he reined in his steeds he applied the brake good and hard.

"Here I are, on time ag'in, people!" he shouted, "an' everything is lovely! Plenty of passengers an' plenty of mail."

The mailbag was promptly tossed into the outstretched hands of the storekeeper, and then those of the passengers who had been riding on top of the coach got down, no doubt very glad to arrive at their destination.

Out of the vehicle came two men, three women and two children.

One of the men was a short, stout German, who still clung to the style of dress of his fatherland.

He was a pretty green one, by his actions, too, and when the scout took a look at him and sized him up a grin came over his weather-beaten countenance.

"I reckon that galoot is one of ther comical ones yer



see in ther shows in ther big cities," he commented, looking at his wife.

"He does look like a stage Dutchman," spoke up Jim Dart.

"But it is hardly likely that he is an actor," said Anna. "He looks so innocent that it is doubtful that he is putting on."

Those of the passengers who were not met by their friends or relatives came to the waiting-room, as a matter of course.

A big, smoking lamp was blazing in front of it, and they could readily read the sign and see that it was a place for them to wait.

There were but three who came to it and looked around them in a manner that was both anxious and curious.

The so-called waiting-room was used for other purposes than for the passengers of Joe Skinner's Stagecoach Line to wait in.

There was a little bar in one corner and a roulette wheel in another.

A couple of big, square tables and some benches and stools made up the rest of the furniture.

On the walls were a few cheap prints, which were topped off plentifully by cobwebs and dust.

The three new arrivals to enter the place were the fat German and an elderly couple, whose every appearance indicated that they were extremely pious.

They evidently came from well back in the East, too.

Wild and his companions followed them inside the shanty, as did several of the miners.

Our friends were not surprised to see the bar and gambling outfit in the place, though there was no sign outside but the one declaring it to be a waiting-room.

There were half a dozen men there, who had not taken the trouble to come out and witness the arrival of the stagecoach.

They were gambling and drinking, some of them very much under the influence of liquor.

When the strangers came in little attention was paid to them at first.

But when the men saw that there were young and pretty girls among them they paused long enough to look them over.

Arietta, Anna and Eloise made a very good impression.

The miners always liked to look upon females that were comely, and the majority of them had the utmost respect for them.

From the girls the men turned to the elderly couple.

Some of them grinned.

But when the stout German walked up to the little bar they laughed outright.

He did look rather comical with his peaked cap, short coat and big carpet-bag.

"I vill hafe me ein glass of lager," he said, smiling at the red-shirted man who was tending the bar.

"I reckon yer won't, Dutchy," was the reply. "We

don't keep lager here. It would cost too much ter git it here. You kin have some good whisky if yer want it."

"Vell, I vill hafe a leedle schnapps, den."

"See here!" and the man looked fiercely at him. "Do yer want whisky?"

"Yaw. I vill take me visky."

"All right. But don't go ter tryin' any snaps on me, 'cause I ain't used ter it."

A bottle and glass were put out and the German did not stop until he had filled the glass to the brim.

He swallowed it quickly and had a choking fit as the result.

But he soon recovered, and, laying a ten-cent piece on the bar, turned to go.

"Hold on!"

The man with the red shirt quickly reached under the counter and drew a big six-shooter.

"Vot's der matter?" inquired the German.

"I want jest forty cents more fur that drink you took."

"Py shimminny! Dot vas a fraud already. I vill not pay fifty cents for ein drink of schnapps."

"You'll pay it or die, Dutchy. Tanglefoot is putty dear in these parts, I want yer ter know. We have ter charge fifty cents a drink. Now, just kindly pay, 'cause I'd hate ter turn you over ter ther undertaker."

"Py shimminny! Vy I vos only pay me ten cents for schnapps in dot St. Louis."

"That's a good ways from here. Come down, now, or off goes your head!"

The German hastened to pay.

Of course, this furnished lots of amusement for the lookers-on.

The elderly couple were as much interested as anyone, and they smiled, though rather sadly.

"You shouldn't drink the vile stuff, my friend," said the man, walking over to the German. "I find that my good advice, which was given to you as we rode together in the stagecoach, has been wasted."

"I guess me so, meester," replied the stout foreigner, grinning. "You say you vos from Prooklyn, und dot you vos come owit Vest mit your vife to dry und stop der miners from drinking too much schnapps. You vos a funny old man, und so vos your frau—your vife, I mean."

This provoked a hearty laugh and caused the advocate of temperance to redden considerably.

"Please give me your name," he said, taking out a notebook and pencil.

"Carl Metz vos my name."

"I will put it down for future reference."

"Dank you, mine friend; vot vos your name already?"

"My name? Oh, I think it is just about the proper time to introduce myself. There are many here who are no doubt addicted to the liquor habit, and I want them to understand that I have come here to save them from ruin. My name is Joel Goode, and I always try to do good to my fellow-creatures."

"Good, Meester Goode!"



The twinkle in the eyes of Carl Metz showed that he was not without humor.

"Joel," said the woman, catching him by the sleeve, "come over here and see what these men are doing."

"No, Sally, they are gambling! I have seen such business before. Gambling is wicked."

"But I just want you to see them. A man just put down a dollar and took up five for it. That is a quick way to make money, Joel. We ought to try it just once."

The old man held up his hands in horror.

"Don't talk that way, Sally!" he cried. "If we should do what you want to do we would both be lost—eternally lost! Gambling is wicked."

"But it wouldn't be so wicked if we won, Joel," persisted the woman.

A shout of laughter went up from those standing about, and, realizing that she was the cause of it, Mrs. Goode caught her husband by the arm and hurried him out of the waiting-room.

Someone directed them to the tavern, and, hearing what was said, the German started after them.

"Well, I guess we'll go back to the tavern, too," observed our hero. "There will be more fun there than anywhere else in the camp, I guess. Those three people have so much of it in them that some of it will have to come out whether they want it to or not."

They walked back to the tavern, and as they paused before the door that opened into the part of the house that was set apart for those of the guests who did not care to visit the bar, Wild turned and saw that Montana Mose and three men were coming that way.

It struck him that they were coming there for the purpose of starting a row, and if that was the case he meant to be on hand.

"Go on in the sitting-room," he said to the girls. "We will stop in the bar-room for awhile. You can entertain the temperance man and his wife, for they went in this way."

"All right," answered Arietta. "I suppose the German fellow will be out there, and you will have a laugh at his expense."

Carl Metz had gone direct to the bar-room, as they found out when our three friends walked in.

He was standing at the bar arranging for his supper, a night's lodging and breakfast when Wild and his partners found him.

He had just paid over the money exacted by the man in charge when Montana Mose and three of his new-found friends came in.

When he came in now it could be seen that he was in a mood for almost anything.

The three miners with him were in about the same state.

One of them was a smooth-faced fellow, who looked as though he might be a half idiot, or a very weak-minded mortal, at the most.

His name was John Derby, but everyone called him Simple John.

Since he had been at Skull Bone he had paid strict attention to his own business, and had never been seen to take a drink of anything strong.

Consequently those who knew him were not a little surprised to see him in a state of intoxication.

By his manner, the simple fellow had taken a great liking for Montana Mose, for he kept close to him, and when a drink was ordered by the ruffian he nodded and smiled idiotically at those around him.

"Drinkin' tanglefoot, eh, Simple John?" observed Sam, the bartender, as the fellow called for the bottle.

"Yes," was the reply, "tanglefoot makes your brain sharp, so Montana Mose says, and I believe it. Folks always said I was a fool, but I'm going to show 'em I ain't."

"Good, Simple!" cried the other two men who had come in with him. "You're all right, no matter who says you ain't."

Montana Mose stood looking at Carl Metz now.

He had noticed Young Wild West and his partners when he came in, but he had not dropped his gaze upon the German until now.

Carl was a fit subject for a bad man to operate on.

The fighting bob-cat thought that way at once.

He seemed to forget what had happened to him before sundown, and, without paying the least attention to anyone else in the room, he moved up to the German.

The first thing Carl knew his ear was seized and he was pulled along the edge of the bar.

"Give ther Dutchman a drink!" shouted Montana Mose, banging his fist on the bar. "He's goin' ter drink, an' then he's got ter dance fur us."

"Shimminny!" exclaimed Carl; "vot is der matter already? Let me my ear go vonce!"

Instead of complying with the request the villain gave a jerk that brought a howl of pain from the lips of the German.

Then it was that Jim Dart stepped forward.

Wild had promised him that the next time Montana Mose picked a row Dart should have a chance at him.

"Go it, Jim!" Wild said, and Jim did not hesitate a second.

"Let the Dutchman alone!" he exclaimed; "he was not bothering you."

The fighting bob-cat turned his gaze on the boy for a moment and then shot a glance over at Wild and Charlie.

"What are you interferin' fur?" he demanded. "I ain't botherin' yer."

"Well, you let go of the Dutchman, or I'll bother you, and I'll do it hard, too!"

## CHAPTER IV.

### WHAT MONTANA MOSE HAD IN VIEW.

Montana Mose had certainly been "whooping it up" since he had left the tavern.



Mose did not let go.

Jim was just itching to get a crack at the villain, and he did not hesitate to shoot out his right fist.

It caught the man squarely on the mouth and sent him back against the counter so heavily that it was nearly overturned.

The German was released instantly.

"Shimminny!" he cried, sticking to what appeared to be his favorite expression of surprise.

Simple John uttered a cry of alarm and got back out of the way in a hurry.

But the other two men did not show signs of fear.

On the contrary, they both drew their revolvers.

"Just put your shooters back in your belt; if you don't you drop where you stand!"

It was Young Wild West who uttered the words.

He had whipped out his own shooter in a jiffy, and so had Cheyenne Charlie.

The two miners had not met our friends until now.

They did not know what sort of stuff they were made of.

But they soon found out.

When they saw that they were covered they turned pale.

"Put the shooters back in your holsters!" cried Young Wild West, his eyes flashing dangerously.

There was only one thing for them to do if they wanted to live, they thought, so they obeyed.

Meanwhile, Jim Dart had covered Montana Mose as he was in the act of pulling his revolver.

The German stood in the center of the room gaping with astonishment, and not one of the miners gathered there offered to move an inch.

There was a stillness that was almost deathly for the space of several seconds.

Then it was broken by Carl Metz.

"Shimminny!"

The German was so much surprised that he could hardly realize that he was not dreaming.

"It's all right!" Montana Mose called out, suddenly. "Let it drop fur to-night. I'm a fightin' bob-cat from ther North Woods, but when a galoot smashes me in ther jaw with his fist an' then gits a gun under my nose afore I kin draw, I'll give in every time. But this ain't ther last of it! It's goin' ter be a case of shoot on sight when daylight comes."

"All right," said Jim. "We will be on hand, Montana Mose."

"You kin jest bet that there's only one way ter stop me from gittin' square on any galoots what has made me mad, an' that is ter kill me!" went on the villain, looking around with an air of importance.

"Well, if you should go under while you're trying to get square you wouldn't be the first man that went that way," our hero answered.

"Never mind about that. It ain't pleasant ter talk about ther dead. You know my game, Young Wild West, an' I know yours. You're a quick shot, I reckon, but there is them what is jest as quick, when they've got half a show."

"Shimminny!"

Once more the German gave vent to his surprise.

"I told yer I was goin' ter make yer dance, Dutchy," observed Montana Mose, looking at him, "an' you kin bet I'll do it afore another twenty-four hours is gone!"

"You vos hafe to catch me midout mine friends, den," retorted Carl, nodding at Wild and his two partners.

"Oh! you'll dance all right, but it will only be fur ther fun of it. I ain't got no grudge ag'in yer, Dutchy; I jest wanted ter have a little fun, that's all. I'm ther fightin' bob-cat from ther North Woods, an' when I git goin' good an' hard a railroad train couldn't stop me! I ain't got ter goin' right since I've been here. But look out fur me when I do!"

This sort of talk was amusing to Wild and his partners.

They knew the villain was simply rattling off a lot of bluff to try and impress the German and the rest of his listeners.

The treatment the four rascals had received had been the means of sobering them slightly, and when they turned to go out a few minutes later they were all walking steadily.

Simple John was right at the side of Montana Mose, acting similar to a dog that loved its master.

The four seemed glad to get out of the tavern, and as they turned toward a saloon that was nearly opposite the waiting-room one of the men remarked:

"I didn't have any idea that them galoots was anything like that, Mose. Why, we didn't stand no show at all."

"No, Butts, we didn't" answered Mose. "But jest wait! It'll be our turn afore long. You jest take us ter that lone shanty you was tellin' me about ter-night. We'll make it our secret hidin'-place, an' after awhile we'll be in a good money-makin' business. I'm Montana Mose, an' I'm ther fightin' bob-cat from ther North Woods! I didn't come down ter Arizony ter be made a fool of by any boy, an' yer kin bet yer boots on it!"

"I bet yer didn't, Mose!"

"Of course yer didn't," spoke up Simple John. "They kin make a fool of me easy enough, but they can't do it ter you, Montana Mose. You're ther greatest an' smartest man I ever seen. You're cute, you are. You've learned me that tanglefoot sharpens a man's wits. I'm gittin' smarter since I took some ter-night, an' I'll stick to yer, Montana Mose, an' I'll do everything yer say."

"That sounds putty good from Simple, don't it, De Pew?" asked the man called Butts.

"I should say so," answered De Pew. "I reckon Simple John is gittin' some brains."

"Oh, he has got brains all right," spoke up Montana Mose. "Didn't you say that he was the feller what found ther cave?"

"Yes, he's ther galoot what found it, an' he never told anything about it ter a livin' soul but me an' Butts, did yer, Simple?"

"No," answered the foolish fellow, shaking his head and trying to look wise. "I told you about it because I wanted



to tell somebody, an' you was ther first ones I met after I found ther cave with ther door built in front of it. It ain't a shanty, what you keep sayin' all ther time; it's a cave with a front on it, like a shanty. I oughter know, 'cause I found it, hadn't I, Montana Mose?"

"Sartin you had," replied the fighting bob-cat, patting the poor fool on the shoulder in a patronizing way. "You're all right, John."

"I knowed I was!" exclaimed Simple, showing great delight. Oh, ain't I glad I met you, Montana Mose! I like Butts, an' I like De Pew, but I like you better than anybody. I'll do anything you say, Montana Mose!"

"That's right, John," and again the villain patted the fool's shoulder.

The two were standing in front of a low saloon as they talked, for they had reached it before the conversation had come to that point, and Montana Mose had paused to let Simple John have his say.

The fact was that Montana Mose wanted to use the poor fool, and he meant to encourage him all he could, so he would find a willing tool in him.

The villain had come south because he was wanted up in Montana for murder and robbery.

He had stopped at several places on his way, and when he finally struck Skull Bone he decided that he had come far enough to escape being caught, so he decided to make his abiding place there.

But he had received quite a setback at the start, since Young Wild West and his partners had given it to him pretty hard.

All the villainous instincts of the man's nature were aroused now, and he was bent upon being revenged upon our hero.

But there was something else that had crept in, too.

Montana Mose had seen Arietta that night, and he had been smitten by her lovely form and face, if we may use the word in connection with such a scoundrel as he was.

And the strangest part of it was that he had decided to make the girl consent to become his wife of her own free will and accord.

The very moment he saw Arietta he began to think of a way to get her in his power.

But a short time before he had been told about a cave that was situated on the mountain-side that had been found by Simple John.

This cave had been occupied by someone and had been abandoned for some reason or other.

It contained the crude necessities for living, and was boarded up at the entrance and had a door, which could not be seen from the outside unless one knew exactly where to look for it.

Montana Mose's brain was active enough for him to speedily think out a plan that would enable him to keep the girl in that cave until she finally consented to become his wife.

Then he meant to marry her and settle down and live like the rest of the citizens of Skull Bone.

As they were entering the saloon he was thinking hard to find a means of getting Arietta to the cave without the knowledge of her friends.

Of course, he depended upon Simple John to help him, but just how he did not know.

"We'll have a drink or two, an' then we'll all go over an' have a look at this cave what's got ther shanty front to it," he said.

So they went in and remained in the saloon for perhaps an hour.

Then Simple John said he was ready to lead them to the secret cave.

"It ain't more'n half a mile from ther shanty of Butts," he said. "We kin walk it in a few minutes. We ain't got no horses, but you kin ride yours, Montana Mose."

"Well, I'll leave my nag over at ther shanty of Butts, an' then we kin all walk," was the reply.

So they set out a few minutes later and the horse was duly left at the shanty.

Then the four talked over things and decided that they would be able to form a band of road agents and prey upon the travelers who passed along the trail, making the cave their headquarters, providing they could not make money fast enough any other way.

## CHAPTER V.

### HOP'S JOKE ON THE TEMPERANCE PEOPLE.

Our friends spent what might be called a quiet night at Skull Bone.

True, there was more or less noise made by the frequenters of the tavern, but as no quarreling or fighting took place, it was considered a quiet night.

The temperance man and his wife had retired very early, and they got up very early in the morning, too, for when Wild came down the narrow stairs of the shanty-like structure he found Mr. Joel Goode and his wife, Sally, strolling about in the rear of the tavern, taking in what beauties of nature there were to be seen.

Arizona scenery is not altogether displeasing, by any means.

It is not all a desert of gray sand, with here and there a growth of pinons and cacti, as some may believe.

Some of the soil is extraordinary fertile, and there is where vegetation grows in rich profusion.

But the scene that the temperance advocates were looking upon was the rising sun.

Old Sol was just showing his top above a distant mountain ridge that showed up in a hue of greenish gray across an alkali plain.

Above the ridge the sky shone in red, yellow and purple, and when Young Wild West paused to think of it he nodded and said to himself:

"I've seen plenty of pictures that could not come up to



that. No wonder strangers are impressed by an Arizona sunrise! But such sights are old to us, and we think nothing of them."

Wild had hardly got out of the house when Charlie and Jim appeared.

Joel Goode and his wife turned and saw the three.

They at once walked over.

"Good-morning!" each of them said in a pleasant way.

Our friends returned the salute, of course.

"You people belong in this part of the world, I suppose?" ventured Goode, questioningly.

"Well, not exactly, but we have been in Arizona quite often in the past two or three years," Wild answered.

"Have you ever been East?"

"No further than Chicago."

"Ah! Well, we call that West where I come from. But the reason I wanted to find out whether you belonged here or not was because I would like to have a little advice. You see, Mrs. Goode has fallen heir to quite a fortune, and, being a woman who believes in doing all the good in the world she can, she decided to come to the wild West and try and teach the rough characters we had heard so much about not to drink intoxicating liquors. Rum holds sway out here, you know."

"Yes, I guess it has got a good hold on the miners," answered Wild, with a laugh.

"We found it out in the small cities we stopped at, so we concluded to try and do what we could in the mining camps."

"Well, I don't know as you want any advice from me, but I will tell you just what I think. It is this: An advocate of temperance don't stand much show in places of this kind. The men are roughing it for the purpose of making money. Some of them save what they make and others spend it as fast as they get it. It is an enjoyment to them to be able to spend it, and whisky is the article most sought for. Take away their tanglefoot, as they call it, and it would not be long before they would be hunting up a spot where it could be had. Then there is another thing to be taken in consideration. Sometimes there are a bad lot of men at a camp, and when a person comes along and tries to induce them to change their habits and modes of living they get ugly. I know of a case where a man was lynched just because he was a strong advocate of temperance."

"Mercy!" cried Mrs. Goode, holding up her hands in horror; "I had no idea it was as bad as that."

"Well, we have been around a great deal, and we know considerable about the ways of the West, don't we, boys?"

"You bet we do!" exclaimed Charlie and Jim at the same time.

"I am afraid we will have a hard time of it, Sally," observed Goode.

"Yes, Joel," was the reply. "But we will do our best."

It was just then that Hop Wah, the Chinaman, appeared on the scene.

He had just got up, and, as was his custom, he was going to see to the horses belonging to the party.

"There is what you call a terrible example," said Jim, pointing out the Celestial. "He gets under the influence of whisky every chance he can. But I doubt if you could convince him it is not good to partake of strong drink. He is a heathen, you know."

"We will try him right now!" exclaimed the good lady. "Come here, Mr. Chinaman; we want to talk to you."

"Whattée want?" asked Hop, looking a bit surprised.

"Don't you know it is wrong to drink intoxicating liquors? You will ruin your stomach, destroy your nerves and debase your mind if you don't call the vile habit to a halt."

"Me dlink lillie tanglefoot, 'cause um makee feel likee bully boy with um glasse eye," said Hop, smiling blandly.

"What does he say, Joel?" asked the woman, looking at her husband.

"He says whisky makes him feel like a bully boy with a glass eye," was the reply.

"Well, whatever is that, can you tell me?"

"I don't know exactly, Sally."

Hop Wah noticed that Wild and his partners were smiling, so he thought he might as well go on and have a little fun with the temperance couple.

"Me showee nicee lillie tlick," he said, getting close to them. Wild and his partners did not know exactly what he meant to do, but they were watching him closely, and they were positive that he put a few things in the pockets of Joel Goode's coat. They also were quite sure that he slipped something into the pocket of the good woman's skirt, too.

Hop was doing plenty of talking as he managed his sleight-of-hand business, and the elderly couple were listening in amazement.

He told them how he had a brother in China who was a great mandarin, and who had lately introduced ice cream trees in his garden.

When it came to this Goode and his wife looked at the Celestial questioningly.

But Hop was so innocent and earnest that they really thought he was telling the truth, as far as he knew it.

"Icee cleam tlees velly muchee nicee," went on Hop; "my uncle whittée me an' tellee me allee 'bouttee. Me likee icee cleam."

Goode happened to look over at our friends and found that their faces wore broad smiles.

"I hardly think the Chinaman is as truthful as he should be," he observed, as he realized that Hop was just talking to have some fun with them.

"Not very truthful, I guess," retorted our hero.

"Well," and Goode turned to the Chinaman, "how about the trick you were going to show us?"

"Lat so," answered Hop. "You givee me bottle with lillie whisky in; den me showee tlick."

"A bottle with a little whisky in!" echoed the temperance man. "Why, I would not do it if I could."

"You gottee bottle with lillie whisky in," declared Hop. "Me see you buy lillie while ago."



Mrs. Goode looked sharply at her husband.

"Don't you see how it is?" Goode asked. "The Chinaman is a great deal smarter than he looks to be, and he is poking fun at us."

"You gottee bottle with lillie whisky in," persisted Hop, pointing to his coat pocket.

The man put his hand in his pocket, as a matter of course.

Then it was that a horrified expression crept over his face.

He slowly pulled a half-pint bottle from his pocket, and as he held it up a small quantity of something in liquid form showed in it.

"Joel Goode, what does this mean!" cried his wife, and then she seized the bottle.

She extracted the cork in a jiffy and applied the bottle to her nose.

"It is liquor!" she shrieked. "You—you——"

But just then the astonished man pulled something else from his pocket.

It was a picture that had been cut from an illustrated paper and showed a girl in tights.

Mrs. Goode quickly pounced upon that, too.

Then she shrieked some more.

But he was not done extracting articles from his coat pocket yet.

The next thing he brought forth was a short-stemmed clay pipe.

His wife made a dive for the pocket.

She brought out a pack of playing-cards and some dirty-looking poker chips.

"There!" she cried, dramatically. "You have been deceiving me! The wicked ways of the wild West have turned your brain. You have taken up all the vices to be found here. Never again will I speak to you! You are no longer a husband of mine!"

Goode looked more annoyed than anything else.

He knew he had not placed the articles in his pocket, and that being the case the Chinaman must have done it.

"It is a joke, Sally," he tried to explain. "The Chinaman put these things in my pocket. He must be a sleight-of-hand performer. He has been having some fun at our expense. This is what we get for not minding our own business. Let the heathen drink all the whisky he wants to, I say! I am done trying to teach people to abstain from strong drink!"

"Better see whatee Melican woman gottee in her pockee," Hop suggested.

Goode took the hint.

He made a grab for his wife's skirt and felt something hard there.

"Produce!" he cried; "let's see what you have got, Sally. If I have been deceiving you, what have you been doing to me?"

The woman hesitated a moment and then thrust her hand in her pocket.

Slowly, and with a whitening face, she drew forth a flask.

It was a little over half full of whisky!

Goode seized it and got a whiff of it.

"Ha, ha!" he cried, triumphantly; "so you are a whisky drinker, too, Sally?"

Then the good woman burst into tears and threw herself in his arms.

Wild thought it time the Chinaman's funny business stopped.

"Light out, you yellow rascal!" he said.

"Alee light, Mislér Wild," answered Hop, but he did not move from the spot until he had gathered up the articles that had caused so much excitement.

"I am sorry the joke went so far," said our hero, addressing the couple. "You see, the Chinaman is a very clever fellow, and we did not know what he was up to. Leave him alone in the future. Don't try to reform him, for it can't be done. I have tried to do it myself, as far as his drinking habits are concerned, but it is useless. However, the good qualities he is possessed of more than offset his bad ones, so we will let it go at that."

Goode forced a smile, but his wife still took it serious.

But as they walked back to the tavern Wild managed to make her understand all about it, and then she grew indignant.

Our friends let them go in and they walked around to the front.

They found some of the miners who had been in the bar-room when Montana Mose met his defeat at our hero's hands.

"Good-mornin', boys," said one of them.

"Good-morning," they answered.

"Well, I reckon you give Montana Mose more than he wanted, 'cause he's left ther town fur good, I hear."

"Well, I guess the place is better off without such fellows as he is," our hero observed.

"That's what everybody thinks, I reckon. It's funny, though, that a stranger like that could git Simple John ter go away with him."

"So he took the foolish fellow with him, eh?"

"Yes, I heard last night that Montana Mose was ther first galoot Simple John ever took to. He seemed ter fall in love with Montana Mose from ther first minute he seen him."

"Well, half-witted folks are apt to take queer notions."

"Well, Simple John give up his job at ther Hot Stuff Mine an' lit out a little while ago, bag an' baggage. He bought a horse, too, an' that means that he's gone travelin' with Montana Mose."

"I don't know what Montana Mose could want with sich a foolish galoot as that feller is," remarked Cheyenne Charlie. "I s'pose he wanted a pard bad, though, an' he was ther only one he could git ter go with him."

This seemed to be the logical construction to put to the matter, so they all agreed with the scout.



Pretty soon the breakfast-bell rang and our friends went in.

They found the girls ready and waiting for them, and then all hands sat down.

Carl Metz, the stout German, was there, and he greeted them pleasantly.

Mr. and Mrs. Joel Goode were rather quiet during the meal.

Evidently they felt a little sore over what had happened a short time before.

After breakfast Arietta asked Wild to go out riding with her and have a look about the vicinity of the camp.

"All right, Et," was the reply.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE DISAPPEARANCE OF YOUNG WILD WEST.

Arietta always liked to ride around with her dashing young lover when they came to a town or camp.

The beautiful girl was very proud of the Champion Deadshot and he was proud of her.

The girl could handle a rifle or revolver as well as the average Western man, and she was remarkably cool in times of danger.

As none of their companions had been invited to accompany them, they did not offer to join them.

Wild called Hop, and in a few minutes he brought their horses around to the front of the tavern.

Our hero rode a splendid sorrel stallion, while his sweetheart's mount was a cream-colored horse that was as pretty as a picture.

Both were speedy and possessed of great endurance, more especially the sorrel.

Spitfire, for that was his name, had never yet met his match, and many were the exciting races he had won for his dashing young master.

"We'll be back in about an hour," Wild said, as he assisted Arietta to mount. "It may be that we will strike something in the line of game, and if we do we will fetch it back for the proprietor's wife to cook for us."

The boy vaulted lightly and then rode off at the side of Arietta.

They made such a fine appearance that half a dozen miners who were standing near could not refrain from giving them a cheer.

Wild acknowledged it by tipping his wide-brimmed sombrero.

"I guess we'll go this way first, Et," he said, as he started for the trail that led from the easterly side of the mining camp. "It is the way we came yesterday, I know, but when we get to the outskirts we'll start around to the right and make a circle of Skull Bone."

"All right, Wild," was the reply.

Both had their Winchester rifles with them—they never went far, in fact, without having them slung over their shoulders, especially when they were on horseback.

They rode along at a very easy gait, as they were in no particular hurry to make the round.

When they got about a quarter of a mile outside of the camp they came to a ridge that was well covered with trees and shrubbery.

"I guess we'll ride around this ridge, Et," said Wild. "It looks as though it turns right around over there and slopes to the level of the camp."

"Yes, there might be a bear, or some birds, anyway, there," was Arietta's reply.

A little way along the ridge they came to a gully that ran in a zig-zag fashion right to the foot of a steep ascent.

Wild saw that the ascent was too much for their horses, but he took it for granted that there was a way to get around it to the left, though it could not be seen from where they now were.

They rode right ahead, and when within a short distance of the end of the gully Wild suddenly caught sight of a black bear disappearing in the bushes.

The animal was making up the hill, and he knew if he was to get a shot at it he must dismount and go it on foot.

"Wait here, Et," he said, as he quickly dropped from the saddle. "Charlie is very fond of bear steaks, and I am going to try and take back some with us."

"Where is he, Wild?"

The girl was anxious to know, for she thought she might have a chance to try a shot.

"Right up there at the end of the gully. He went in the bushes, which are so thick there that it will be impossible to get a shot at him from here. I'll get him all right. When I fire you come on to the foot of the hill."

"All right."

Our hero hastened in the direction he had last seen the bear, and his sweetheart remained at a halt, holding the bridle-rein of the sorrel.

She watched Wild until he was lost to view, the same as the bear had been, and then she listened for the report of his rifle, which she knew must sound pretty soon.

But five minutes slipped by and she heard nothing.

Then all of a sudden the report of a rifle sounded.

The girl nodded in a satisfied way and exclaimed:

"Wild has dropped the bear, all right. Now I'll ride up and wait for him to come down the hill."

She pushed through the gully, leading the sorrel at the side of her own horse.

When she was as far as she could go she halted, as a matter of course.

She listened, but could hear nothing of her young lover.

After waiting for a couple of minutes she called out:

"Wild!"

There was no response.

"Wild!" she cried, in a louder tone of voice.

Still there was no answer.

"That is funny," mused the girl. "What can be the



matter? Wild would not refuse to answer my call unless there was good reason for it."

Arietta was certainly puzzled.

She could not bring herself to think that the rifle had gone off prematurely and killed her lover, for she knew he was too careful for anything like that to happen.

And if he had missed the bear and was fighting hand-to-hand with it she would surely hear the noise, unless by some cause the creature had got the best of him and rendered him unconscious.

She called out once more, and then receiving no answer, dismounted and started to climb the hill.

She had seen just where her lover went and she was following the trail through the bushes.

About two hundred feet from the foot of the hill she suddenly came upon the carcass of a bear.

"There!" she exclaimed; "I know now that Wild shot the bear, but where is he?"

She paused and listened.

Nothing was heard above the twittering of some birds in the trees.

Arietta had experienced too much in the line of danger to be afraid to look for Wild.

She also had learned that it was best to be cautious in a case of this kind.

It now struck her very forcibly that her lover had fallen in the hands of enemies.

There was absolutely no other way to account for his disappearance.

And if such was the case it would not be good policy for her to let his enemies know that she was around.

If she did they might manage it so they got her in their power, too.

Who his enemies were she did not know, but it was quite natural for her to think of the man called Montana Mose as being at the bottom of it.

She had heard all about the villain and how he had threatened to shoot Wild on sight.

Also that Montana Mose had left the mining camp that morning.

"It is that fellow, I'll bet, who is at the bottom of this," thought the brave girl. "It was only a ruse on his part to give it out that he was going to leave. He was so bitter against Wild that he acted that way on purpose to throw him off his guard, and he has probably been hiding somewhere so he could watch what was going on in Skull Bone. If he did do this he certainly saw me and Wild ride out that way."

Such things had happened before, so it was nothing more than natural that Arietta should think this way.

"Montana Mose has got Wild, as sure as I stand here!" thought the girl. "But where has he taken him to, that's the question?"

There was only one way to find out, and that was to look.

Arietta cautiously approached the carcass of the bear.

The animal lay upon a big flat rock in an open spot, and

as she looked for the footprints of Wild she found that the ground was so hard and flinty there that none could possibly show.

The girl knew how to pick up a trail, so she moved over to where the ground was softer and then began making a circle around the rock.

She had gone just about halfway around it when she came upon footprints in plenty.

The sharp eyes of the girl detected that they had not all been made by Wild, either.

She was now satisfied that the conclusion she had come to was the correct one.

But this only made her more determined than ever to find and save her lover.

She listened, to make sure that there was no one coming, and then, picking up the trail, followed it along the slope through the bushes.

In some places the footprints showed so plainly that she could readily see that they had been made by two men.

One of them had an extra large foot and the other a medium, but neither of them were Wild's.

But she was positive that she had seen Wild's footmarks on the spot she had first discovered them, and that meant that he had been captured and carried away bodily.

The girl followed the footprints until finally they became lost on a ledge of rock that ran along a steep declivity about halfway up the hill.

As Arietta looked over the precipice and saw that there was a deep opening below that was filled with jagged rocks, a shudder came over her.

What if the villains had thrown Wild over to his death?

It was possible that this had been done, and the brave girl feared it had.

She searched about for fully fifteen minutes, and at the end of that time was forced to acknowledge herself beaten.

She failed to pick up the trail from the point where it could no longer be seen.

There was but one thing for her to do now, and that was to go for help.

But it was with a feeling of reluctance that she started to leave the spot.

However, she kept on resolutely, and soon reached the spot where she had left the horses.

It was not very far to the tavern, so, mounting, she rode off, leading Wild's steed with her.

She rode a great deal faster than she had coming out.

Anna and Eloise were on the porch of the tavern when she rode up without Wild and they immediately called for Charlie and Jim, who were within hearing.

The two came out just as Arietta brought the horses to a stop.

"Wild is missing," she said, speaking very calmly for one who was placed in such a state.

"What!" cried Charlie and Jim in a breath.

"It is right; Wild is missing," she went on. "He went up a hill the other side of the ridge over there for the purpose of shooting a bear. He shot the bear, but I can't



find him. I found his footprints and those of two others, though, and that satisfies me that he has been captured by his enemy, Montana Mose."

"Montana Mose!" echoed Jim Dart.

"Do yer think it was that measly coyote, Arietta?" cried the scout.

"Yes. Who else is his enemy around here?" she answered.

"Well, I don't know. But there was a couple of galoots besides ther fool what was with Montana Mose. They was actin' as though they was willin' ter stick by him."

"It is likely they are sticking by him. Montana Mose has not gone far from the camp, you can depend upon it. It is he who is at the bottom of Wild's disappearance."

Charlie and Jim were not long in getting ready to go and look for our hero.

Just as they were leaving Hop Wah came around the house.

He had heard enough to let him know that Wild was missing.

"Whattée me do, Missy Alietta?" he asked.

"Go and look for him, Hop," was the reply. "You might be able to find where the scoundrels have taken him to, if they have not thrown him over a cliff and killed him."

"I vos help look already!" spoke up Carl Metz. "Young Vild Vest vos mine friend last night, so I vos look me hard to find him already."

"Dutcheeman comee with Chinaman," said Hop. "Have um pistol ready to shootee."

"I vos hafe der pistol," was the reply.

The two started off, following the tracks of Charlie and Jim, who had gone on foot, since Arietta had told them just how far it was where Wild had shot the bear and then disappeared.

Arietta meant to do some more searching herself, but she decided to go around from the side opposite to that which she took when she reached the ledge where the footprints could no longer be seen.

Of course, the announcement that Young Wild West had been dealt foully with by some persons unknown soon got through the camp.

Several of the miners dropped their work and started out to help in the search.

Among them were the two rascals called Butts and De Pew. They could easily guess that Montana Mose had performed a master stroke and got hold of Young Wild West.

## CHAPTER VII.

WILD IS CHAINED IN A CAVE TO BE STARVED TO DEATH.

Arietta was perfectly right when she thought it was Montana Mose who had caught her dashing young lover.

The fighting bob-cat and Simple John had reached the hidden cave something like an hour before Wild and Arietta rode up the gully at the side of the ridge.

Montana Mose had decided to stay at the cave long enough to make the miners believe that he had gone for good.

Then, with the aid of the simple fellow he wielded such power over, he proposed to pursue the business of robbing the miners while they slept nights.

Butts and De Pew were in the game, of course.

They were to pick out those who were to be robbed and Mose and Simple John were to do the work.

Incidentally the villain from Montana meant to put an end to Young Wild West and capture Arietta.

That was in the game, too.

The cave that had been discovered by the foolish fellow was certainly well hidden from the view of anyone.

It was by the merest accident that he had found it, and he had just enough sense to feel that he had done something great in discovering it.

It had been months since it had been occupied, but the articles of furniture and cooking utensils there were in good condition, and that made it an admirable place for someone who wanted to hide.

Simple John had been strongly inclined to make the cave his own headquarters and keep away from everybody the rest of his life.

But he began to think about coffee, and sugar, and flour, and then he decided not to.

Of course, he had to tell about his discovery to somebody, and the villains, Butts and De Pew, were the ones, as has already been told.

And when Montana Mose was let into the secret he praised Simple John so highly that the poor fool came to the conclusion that the fighting bob-cat was the greatest man alive.

It was the first time he had ever been praised, as far as he could remember, and thus the first one to do so easily became his master.

When the two reached the point where the hidden cave was located Montana Mose turned to Simple John and said:

"Now, then, jest show ther way, John; I couldn't find ther way in ter save my neck."

"All right, Mose, I'll find ther way," was the reply. "Yer jest go right ahead this way—but I guess we'd better git off ther horses now. It was good in you to buy this horse fur me, Mose, but I don't know what use I'll have fur him now."

"You may have plenty of use for him before you've had him long, John. You are too smart not to think that, I know."

"Yes, that's right. I guess I might have plenty of use for ther horse."

Simple John smiled and winked as though he had said something very smart.



Then he dismounted and waited for his companion to do likewise.

"Now, then, which is ther way, John?" asked the man from Montana.

"Right this way, Mose," was the reply.

He stepped over to the right and led his horse behind a big rock that loomed up in the form of an old-fashioned high hat, which Mose could not help remarking, and then pointing out a narrow passage, exclaimed:

"There's ther way, Mose. It don't look as though we kin git through there with our horses, but we kin."

"It don't look as though we could git through, that's a fact," was the reply.

And it surely did not look so.

The little passage, as far as appearances went, was nothing more than a niche in the wall of rock.

It extended into the face of the cliff that was there for about a dozen feet and then came to an end in a V-shape.

Simple John walked boldly as far as he could go, and then he leaned his shoulder against the right side.

A big rock moved around slowly and the passage became opened.

"That's wonderful!" exclaimed Montana Mose. "I couldn't see how it was done when we come here last night. By jingo! but that rock is right on a pivot!"

"It can't fall down, either," answered the simple fellow. "It is held there up at the top. See! it runs up to a point an' ther rock above is holler an' presses right down on it."

"You are right, John. This are a wonderful rock. It are natural, too."

"I guess so," nodded John.

They led their horses through the narrow place, and then a very slight pressure against the rock caused it to swing around and block the passage.

They were in a big cave now, with light coming in from an opening in the roof some fifty feet distant.

It was toward the light that Simple John led the way.

The sunlight was streaming in, and as they got to the spot Montana Mose looked out through a break that was about fifteen feet wide, and found that it opened over a chasm that must have been at least fifty feet in depth.

"I guess we could not get in or out that way, John," he observed.

John laughed in his foolish way.

"No, no!" he said.

Then he turned and pointed behind them.

There was a regular shanty front there, with a door that was ajar and the sun shining full upon it.

"There's ther cave!" he cried. "It's all furnished, ready fur us ter live in, Mose! Who would ever think that there was a place like this here?"

"No one would think of it," was the reply. "How did yer come ter find ther way in here, John?"

"Oh, I jest come ter that passage, an' I was tryin' ter squeeze my way as fur back in it as I could, thinkin' that there might be gold there, when ther big rock moved around. I ain't so foolish as I look, Mose, an' I found

how ther big rock worked around like that. I jest pushed it as fur as it would go an' then come on an' found this place."

Montana Mose nodded approvingly.

Then he stepped over and threw open the door.

Plenty of light was admitted, and he could see that the foolish fellow had not been there since their visit of the night before.

There was a sort of couch in one side, a fireplace in a corner and a rough table and some tools and a bench were scattered about.

Some cooking utensils, which were rather rusty, were lying on the table, and on the rough stone floor was a heap of chain and a few mining implements.

"I guess this will do nicely, John," observed the man from Montana. "Now, then, yer kin git ter work an' clean up a bit, 'cause we're goin' ter stay here from now on. Where kin we keep ther horses?"

"In ther cave outside, Mose," was the quick reply. "That's jest a good place fur 'em. There's a spring of water there, too, so all's we'll have ter git is grub fur 'em."

"Well, Butts an' De Pew will help us git all we want in ther line of grub, both fur ourselves an' ther horses."

"Yes," and the foolish man grinned and nodded.

"I'm goin' out by ther way we come in, so I kin learn ter work ther blame rock what is on a pivot."

Simple John nodded.

The poor fool worked away, humming a sort of tune as he worked.

It was curious to think that he could have taken such a liking for the villain he had chosen to associate with, for before meeting him he had never been known to do a thing that was wrong.

Now he was ready to do anything that Montana Mose bade him.

Mose did not come back until pretty close to an hour had elapsed.

By this time Simple John had things in pretty good shape.

When the villainous man from Montana did come in he came in a hurry.

"John," said he, excitedly, "Young Wild West is right out here on the hill. Come on! I want ter git him!"

A look of fear crossed the face of the fool, but he did not hesitate to follow his master.

"I jest caught a glimpse of him sneakin' up through ther bushes with his rifle in his hand, jest as though he was after somethin'. Come on!"

The two hastened through the passage, leaving it open so they would lose no time in getting back in case they were forced to hurry.

Just as they got out the crack of a rifle sounded near by.

It was at that moment that Wild shot the bear he had started to get after leaving Arietta at the foot of the hill with the horses.

He had come up from a direction that was almost opposite to the way they had come to enter the cave.



But he was very close by.

Mose and his foolish follower hastened through the bushes, and in less than twenty seconds came in sight of the dashing young deadshot standing over the fallen bear, not twenty feet away!

Montana Mose gave a motion that meant that Simple John was to help him, and then stepped forward noiselessly.

He clutched the big revolver he carried by the barrel and had it ready to strike a blow with the butt.

Wild was in the act of kneeling to remove the skin from the haunches of the bear, so he cut them off, when he received a blow on the head that rendered him temporarily unconscious.

It was a glancing blow, or it would surely have fractured his skull.

But it answered the purpose of the man who delivered it.

"Grab him, John!" Montana Mose exclaimed, in a low tone. "Don't give him a chance ter git up."

Simple John obeyed.

But there was little use in his holding Wild down.

The boy was stunned so he knew not what was taking place.

Montana Mose quickly removed his weapons from him, and then with a strong cord bound his hands behind his back.

This was but the work of a minute.

"He might have someone with him, so we'll git him in ther cave in a hurry," he said.

As they picked up the helpless form of Young Wild West and hurried away with him both thought they heard someone shouting.

But, instead of listening, they hurried all the faster, and soon had him through the passage and the rock moved back in place.

"Now I reckon we'll see who's at ther top of ther heap," the fighting bob-cat exclaimed, as he deposited our hero on the floor of the cave. "This is what I call wonderful luck, John."

"Yes," answered John, looking in a vague sort of way at the prisoner and then grinning idiotically.

Evidently Simple John could not exactly see the point.

Just then Young Wild West came to.

When he saw the face of Montana Mose bending over him he paled slightly.

But the old gleam of defiance quickly returned to his eyes.

Wild was so used to being in tight places that he never lost his nerve, no matter what happened.

"So it was you who knocked me down, eh?" he said, coolly.

"I reckon it was, youngster," was the reply. "I never spected ter git hold of yer so soon, but I knowed it would only be a question of a short time afore I did."

"Well, you have got me, now what do you propose to do with me?"

"I ain't made up my mind jest how I'll put an end ter yer, Young Wild West, but yer kin bet it will be a good an' sure way, though."

"So you mean to kill me because I wouldn't allow you to bulldoze me at the tavern yesterday afternoon, eh?"

"That's ther startin' part of it, I reckon. You're ther first galoot what ever got ther best of me, an' I swore I'd git even on yer. There's only one way ter do it, an' that's ter put yer off ther earth. I'm a bad man, Young Wild West! I never stops at nothin', either. There's men lookin' fur me what would hang me on sight, but they ain't goin' ter find me. I come down in Arizony ter start over ag'in, an' I never works fur what money I git. I'm goin' ter stay in this snug hidin'-place I've got till I makes enough money ter light out fur some other place. Californy will be my next stoppin' place, an' I'm goin' ter take my man with me, ain't I, John?"

"Yes, I'm goin' with yer, Mose," answered Simple John, doing some grinning and otherwise showing how pleased he was.

"Well, I guess you had better let me go," said Wild, calmly, as he looked around him. "I don't know exactly where I am, but I do know that my friends won't be long in finding this place. Then it will be all up with you, Montana Mose."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the villain. "I guess no one will find this place. They couldn't find it in a lifetime! It's one of ther most snug hidin'-places that ever was, ain't it, John?"

"No one will ever find it," answered John.

Our hero smiled.

"We will see about that," he said.

Montana Mose looked around the cave, and presently his eyes lighted upon a couple of rings that were fastened to the rocky side opposite to where the couch was.

He took hold of the rings and tested them.

They were firmly fastened to the rock.

"Git that chain, John," he said; "we'll chain Young Wild West here an' starve him ter death. That will be fun, won't it?"

"Yes," answered the fool; "that will be fun."

Then he dragged over part of the chain, and in a few minutes our hero was chained securely to the wall of rock in a standing posture.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### NO TRACES ARE FOUND.

Hop Wah was sincere when he declared that he was going to look for Young Wild West, but when he found that Carl Metz, the German, was going with him he could not help thinking that the greenhorn would make an excellent subject to gamble with.

Hop liked to win another person's money—in fact, he had a mania for gambling, anyhow.



The two walked along, keeping in sight of Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart until the wooded ridge was reached.

Then they paused as if by mutual consent.

"Vere ve vos look for dot Young Vild Vest already?" asked the German, looking at his companion earnestly.

"Me no know," was the Chinaman's reply; "we havee tlust to luckee; finde Misler Wild lat way."

Carl shrugged his shoulders.

"I guess me dot ve vos come pack py himself puddy quick already," he observed.

Hop nodded.

"Me t'nkee so," he answered.

"If dot bad man vot dey vos call Montana Mose vos to catch us already he vos kill us puddy quick, maybe, Mr. Hop."

"Me t'inkee so," nodded Hop, shrugging his shoulders.

"S'pose we stay here lillie while?"

"Vell, ve might vait a leedle vile."

The Chinaman sat down on a rock and took a pack of cards from his pocket.

"Vot is dot?" Carl asked.

"Dutcheeman know how playee cards?" Hop queried.

"Yah, I vos know a leedle," was the reply.

"S'pose we play um lillie game? You gottee lillie money, so be?"

"Yah, I vos hafe me a leedle money already."

"You know pokee game?"

"Yah! I vos learn dot game in der city of New York already. It vos one great game, too."

The Celestial smiled blandly.

He looked so innocent as he began shuffling the cards that the German smiled softly to himself.

The fact was that Carl had an idea that he had learned all there was about the great American game called draw poker.

He certainly made a bad mistake.

Hop could beat him at any stage of it with his eyes shut.

But the look on his yellow face did not indicate anything like that.

"We playee for um fifty cents bettee and five dollee limit," the Chinaman observed, looking thoughtfully at the sky.

Carl nodded.

"We cuttee for um deal."

"Yah."

Hop won the deal and proceeded to shuffle the cards just as though he knew very little about them.

When he had done shuffling them he allowed his companion to cut them, after which he proceeded to deal them out one at a time in accordance with the custom.

But he did it so awkwardly that the German must have thought he had struck a very green one at the business, for he smiled and patted himself on the stomach, as much as to say, "I vos make a fool of der Shinee putty quick already."

Hop picked up his five cards and looked them over carefully, while Carl laid down fifty cents as his ante.

"How muchee cards?" asked the Celestial.

"I vill hafe me three cards," was the reply.

Carl looked his hand over after the manner of an old hand at the game and quietly discarded three of them.

Hop gave him three and then, discarding three of his own, took that many himself.

But if the German had been watching him sharp he might have noticed that he took them from the bottom of the pack.

He never dreamed of such a thing as the Chinaman cheating.

He thought he was the most innocent mortal he had ever come across.

The game now proceeded.

Hop met the bet of fifty cents and raised it a dollar.

Carl chuckled, for he had drawn two more kings to the pair he had held.

He thought he had the pig-tailed heathen sure.

Hop looked thoughtful for a moment and then met the raise and boosted it another dollar.

"Me forgittee 'boutee gamee, but me bettee allee samee," he said.

"You vos soon forgid vot you vos forgitted, I vos dink me."

Then he calmly raised it two dollars and began to think it was really a shame to take the poor Chinaman's money.

"Me raisee fivee dollee," observed Hop, after he had studied a moment, or made out that he was studying.

The fact was that the Celestial had four aces.

It was the same old game he had worked many times before on those who had taken him to be an innocent Son of the Flowery Kingdom willing to part with his money.

It so happened that the German did not have a great lot of money on hand.

Then, again, he thought it a shame to take Hop's money from him.

So he did what he thought was the right thing; he called him.

"Vot you vos hafe?" he inquired, smiling all over his fat countenance.

"Me havee um four lillie aces," replied Hop, laying them down. "Looke velly nicee."

Carl Metz looked dismayed.

"Four aces vos beat four kings," he said, slowly; "but four kings vos a bully good hand already."

"Velly goodee hand, four kings," admitted the Chinaman, as he scooped in his winnings.

Carl now arose to his feet.

"I vos dink it better if ve vos go und look for Young Vild Vest," he observed.

"You no gottee more money?" asked Hop, looking at him sadly.

"I vos hafe a leedle more money, but I guess me dot I vos keep it already," was the reply.



"Allee light, Misler Dutcheeman; we go and looker fur Misler Wild," he remarked.

It was evident that the German was just the least bit suspicious of the Chinaman.

But he said nothing just then.

The two now started in the direction Charlie and Jim had taken, Hop carefully depositing the pack of cards in his pocket.

They soon reached the foot of the hill, where Arietta had been in waiting while Wild went up among the bushes to shoot the bear.

But they saw nothing of either the scout or Dart.

Neither of them were anxious to come in contact with any villains, however.

Hop was willing to put up a fight, providing he did get caught in a tight place, though.

But Carl Metz had done very little in the line of fighting, especially with ruffians, who were ready to commit murder.

They walked around for a few minutes and then started across the ridge.

Though they were not aware of it, they walked right past the hidden entrance of the cave our hero had been chained to the wall in.

The first thing they knew they were heading back for the mining camp.

As they walked along they suddenly came upon two men who appeared to be searching about among the bushes.

The two were no others than Butts and De Pew.

When the villains saw the two rather quaint characters they looked at each other and grinned.

"Are you two galoots lookin' fur Young Wild West, too?" Butts asked.

"Yes, we looker allee samee Melican mans," answered Hop, smiling and assuming his look of extreme innocence.

"It are mighty strange where he's got to," spoke up De Pew.

"Velly strange," answered the Celestial, shaking his head. "But," he added, "me t'inkee Young Wild West comee back allee light; he no gittee hurt by bad Melican mans; he velly muchee fightee; he knockee um stuffin' outee bad Melican mans."

"So that is ther way you think about it, eh, you yaller galoot?" queried Butts. "Well, I hope you're right, but I don't think that way."

"Nor I don't, either," remarked his companion. "If ther boy has run afoul of someone what is real bad he's most likely got his medicine afore this."

"Well, if he ain't got his medicine by this time he oughter have it, anyhow," observed De Pew, who could not resist from expressing himself the way he felt.

"So that's ther way you feel about it, hey?" exclaimed a voice, and the next instant Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart stepped from the bushes before the two villains.

Hop and the German were as much surprised as the allies of Montana Mose were.

They had not expected to meet the scout, though they

all should have realized that they were liable to at any minute, since there were several out searching for Wild.

Cheyenne Charlie walked right up to the two men.

There was a dangerous gleam in his eyes, too, and they did not fail to notice it.

"I reckon you two galoots kin tell jest where Young Wild West is," he said. "Now yer kin jest make up your minds that you're goin' ter die if yer don't out with it right away!"

"We don't know nothin' about where he is," answered De Pew, in a frightened voice. "What makes yer think we do?"

"Well, yer jest said enough ter make me think that way. Now, I mean business! If yer don't tell you're goin' ter git your medicine, do yer understand?"

The two men were now thoroughly frightened.

They noticed that both Charlie and Jim had their hands on the butts of their revolvers.

Butts was the most cool of the two.

"See here," he said; "it don't say that 'cause we was with ther man called Montana Mose last night that we're friends of his. As fur as we know, he's gone away, an' he took ther foolish galoot with him. You must think that Montana Mose had something ter do with ther disappearance of Young Wild West, an' that we know all about it."

"That's jest exactly what we do think," answered the scout. "We think that you kin tell us right where we'd be apt to find Young Wild West, too."

"Well, I couldn't tell yer a word about it, not if I was ter die!"

"Nor me, either," quickly chimed in De Pew.

Charlie looked sharply at the two men.

It was evident that he did not believe them.

"Jim," said he, turning to his companion, "what do you think about ther galoots?"

"The same as you do, Charlie," was the reply.

"What are we goin' ter do with these two galoots, then?" Dart thought a moment.

"Well," said he, after a pause, "since you have started to make them tell where Wild is, we may as well keep it up. I tell you what would be a good thing to do."

"What?" asked Charlie.

"See that tree over there?"

"Sartin I do."

"Well, we'll take them over there and hang them."

"Good enough!"

The two villains looked more uneasy than ever.

"You vos hang dem?" Carl Metz asked, looking at Jim.

"Yes," was the reply. "They are rank scoundrels, and they deserve it."

"It was better dot dey vos hafe a trial first, ain'd it?"

"They don't bother with such things out in this part of the country. There is only one thing that can possibly save them, and that is for them to tell where Young Wild West is."

"We can't tell if we don't know," said Butts, shrugging his shoulders.



"That's right," added De Pew.

"Hop," said Jim, "just take the shooters away from those two fellows. We are going to hang them."

"Allee light, Mislér Jim," answered the Chinaman; "me likee do whatter you say. Me wantee findee Mislér Wild."

He stepped over to do as he was bid.

But just then both villains made a bolt for liberty.

The bushes were quite thick near them, and before our friends could lay hands upon them they were out of sight.

Neither Charlie nor Jim wanted to shoot them.

Though they felt that they knew something about the disappearance of Wild, they were not by any means sure of it.

Charlie made a futile attempt to overtake the villains, for they evidently knew more about the lay of the land around there, and quickly eluded him.

"Let them go," said Jim. "We could never get anything out of them, I guess. We have got to make another search."

They did make another search, lasting an hour.

Hop and the German went with them, and they did their level best.

Jim and Charlie were much puzzled, and worried as well.

But they were not going to give up yet.

A few minutes later they met the rest of the searchers.

No one had discovered the least clew that would lead to the discovery of the whereabouts of the missing boy.

It was near noon when the scout and Dart went back to the tavern, firm in the belief that Wild had been taken a good distance away from the camp by his captors, since no traces of him could be found near the spot where Arietta had seen him last.

They found Arietta at the tavern. The brave girl had been defeated at every turn and she was not a little discouraged.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ARIETTA JOINS WILD AS A CAPTIVE.

Charlie and Jim were not long in getting their horses ready.

They meant to ride out along the trail and try and find the tracks made by the horses of Montana Mose and Simple John.

In that way they hoped to find some tidings of the missing boy.

Though they had no desire to eat anything just then, they did not know how long they might be gone, so they took something along with them.

Arietta watched them as they rode off and shook her head.

She was satisfied that they were going on a hopeless

errand, for she did not believe that Wild was far from the spot where she had last seen him.

The girl was pale and worried, but not exactly disheartened.

Anna and Eloise tried to comfort her the best they knew how, but it was little that they could say that had anything cheering about it.

"I'll find him, see if I don't," the brave girl declared. "I am going out again pretty soon, and I shan't come back without him."

It was not until dinner was ready that the girl took her departure.

"I don't want anything to eat until I find Wild," she said, and then, in spite of anything Anna and Eloise could say or do, she picked up her rifle and started off.

Back to the place where she had lost the footprints that morning the girl went, fully determined to accomplish something this time.

She made her way to the ledge again and looked over.

She could see the jagged rocks below, but there was nothing there that looked like a human body, and that gave her a little comfort.

"I will search closer than I did before," she thought.

"I will not give up until I find at least a trace of him."

She walked around the ledge and descended a little slope.

Then she came direct to the hidden entrance to the cave.

Arietta began examining the ground closely.

It was rocky and hard right there, but she thought there might be the least sign of a footprint.

She did not find a footprint, but she did find something else.

It was a bit of rope.

A piece that had no doubt been dropped by Simple John, though it might have been there before they came.

But, anyhow, it gave the girl great encouragement, and she looked about for something further.

She moved right into the passage and stood looking at the big rock that barred her further progress in that direction.

Then, right before her very eyes, the rock moved.

The brave girl gave a start and her eyes opened wide.

Around went the rock, and the next moment the figure of a man sprang out and seized her.

Arietta had been making more or less noise, and she had been heard by Montana Mose, who had been in the act of coming out to see how the land lay.

"Jest ther very one I wanted, above all others in ther world!" Montana Mose cried, exultantly. "I reckon yer come here on purpose fur me ter git yer, little gal."

Arietta made a desperate struggle to free her arms, but it was fruitless.

She was powerless in his strong grasp.

He carried her in the passage, and with his big shoulder pushed the rock around on its pivot and closed it.

"I s'pose you'd like ter see Young Wild West, little girl," he remarked, as he carried her bodily through the



cave to the open spot before the place he had Wild imprisoned in.

Arietta could not have answered if she had wanted to, for he had his hat pressed over her face and mouth.

"John!" cried the fighting bob-cat; "come out here, John."

"All right, Mose," was the quick reply, and the next moment the door swung open and the foolish fellow appeared.

The fellow raised his hands in astonishment when he saw his master with the girl in his arms.

"Wonderful!" he cried. "What have you got, Mose?"

"My intended wife, John. Just step up and take what weapons she has got."

Simple John obeyed quickly enough.

He was more careful in making a search than his master would have been, and he not only took the weapons the girl had in her belt, but a revolver that she had secreted in the bosom of the waist she wore.

Montana Mose had been careful not to allow Arietta to see where she was being taken to, so he was not afraid to let her have the freedom of the cave.

The moment the girl found that she had the use of her eyes, tongue and limbs she uttered a cry for help.

But the cries died on her lips, for she caught sight of Wild chained to the rocky wall before it was fairly uttered.

"Wild!" she cried with joy. "So I have found you at last!"

"Yes, Et," he answered. "But I am afraid it is under very poor circumstances—I mean that you can't do anything for me."

"Oh, yes I can," she retorted. "Just wait. I will get you free from those horrible chains."

"There is one way ter git him free from ther chains an' let him go about his business," said Montana Mose, who stood near them, a cocked revolver in his hand.

"What way is that?" Arietta asked.

The girl was now perfectly cool, and she looked at him unflinchingly.

"Well, if you agree ter marry me Young Wild West kin go."

Arietta flashed a dangerous glance at him.

"Don't talk to me like that!" she cried. "I would kill you before I would marry you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the villain. "I like to hear you talk that way. You are made of ther right kind of stuff, I tell yer! But I reckon yer will agree ter marry me afore you've been here many days. I've promised Young Wild West that he's goin' ter be chained there till he starves to death, an' I'll keep my word! Ther only way ter save him is fur you ter marry me. Of course, I don't s'pose yer want ter do it, but you'll do it afore you'll let ther boy starve ter death. You can't git out of here, not if I told yer to go this minute, so you're fast, my lady! An' I'm goin' ter cut a couple of good whips—one fur me an' one fur Simple John—an' every time yer disobey me

or go too close ter Young Wild West, you'll git flogged! You'll git flogged, do yer hear—flogged! Your proud spirit has got ter be broken. Why, I had yer picked out fur my bride, an' I meant ter have yer here afore to-morrow mornin'; but yer goes an' comes yerself, ter save me ther trouble. Ha, ha, ha!"

The villain laughed fiendishly.

Wild glared at the villain, but it was no use; he was powerless to do anything.

The chains were secure about him, for Mose and his foolish tool had hammered the links together so there was not the slightest chance of his getting free.

"Oh, Wild!" said Arietta, stepping up close to him.

"Here, you get back!" cried Montana Mose, and, picking up a piece of rope, he dealt her a stinging blow across the shoulders.

If Young Wild West could have got loose just then the life of the scoundrel would surely have paid the forfeit.

He tugged desperately at the chains, but it was no use.

"He, he, he!" giggled Simple John; "Mose, ther boy got putty mad 'cause yer hit ther gal, didn't he?"

"I reckon he did," was the reply. "But that's one of ther ways I'll git square on him fur him downin' me. Oh, I'm a cute one, an' don't yer furgit it! Ther gal will be only too glad ter marry me afore she's two days older, see if she don't!"

"Where are yer goin' ter git ther parson, Mose?" questioned the fool, innocently.

"Couldn't you be ther parson, John?"

"Well, I ain't no parson, Mose."

"But you have seen parsons marry folks, I reckon?"

"Yes, I seen Parson Davis when he married my sister Tildy ter Jim Hanks. I know jest what he said, 'I pronounce yer man an' wife, an' what God had jined together no galoot should put asunder.'"

"You've got that right, I reckon, John," and Mose nodded approvingly. "You'll make a good enough parson fur me."

"All right, then, Mose; what you say is all right. I ain't as foolish as I look."

Arietta looked at him as he said the words, and she realized that she was in the power of two dangerous people.

Montana Mose was cruel and heartless, and this man did not have enough sense to know what was right or wrong.

The girl went over to a stool and sat down.

Montana Mose smiled sardonically at Young Wild West when Arietta threw herself on the stool in a dejected manner.

"I guess I hold all ther trump cards now, don't I?" he said.

"If there is anything human about you, you will let the young lady go free," our hero answered.

"Well, there's a whole lot that's human about me, but I ain't goin' ter let ther gal go, jest ther same," was the retort.

"You really mean to make her marry you, then?"



"Jest as sure as you're chained ter that wall, young feller!"

"And you are going to let me go if she agrees?"

"Yes, I'll keep my word on that. I kin blindfold yer an' put yer out of this place, an' yer couldn't find yer way here ag'in in seven years. Yes, I'll keep my word on that. I'll have enough revenge on yer without killin' yer if I make ther gal my wife."

The scoundrel laughed hoarsely, and once more the fool joined in.

"So you really mean that, eh, Montana Mose?"

"I sartinly do."

"Well, I guess you won't have the chance to let me go, then."

"How is that?"

"I wouldn't accept my liberty on such grounds."

"Yer wouldn't, hey?"

"No!"

"You'd starve ter death, then?"

"Yes, a dozen times, if it were possible."

"You're full of grit, Young Wild West. But I reckon after you've been a couple of days without grub or water you'll change your tune. You'll coax ther gal ter marry me, so's yer kin have somethin' ter pass your lips."

"No, I won't. I am not made of that sort of material. But never mind! Just wait awhile. You'll find out that you are not always going to stay at the top of the heap."

"I don't know what makes yer think you're goin' ter git out of ther fix you're in, Young Wild West. I've told yer that there ain't no possible way of your friends landin' where yer are. Ther gal was standin' right at ther entrance ter this big cave, but she never had no more idea that she was than she was of flyin'. Why, when I opened ther secret door she was so surprised that she jest stood there with open mouth an' let me grab her."

"Mose, are yer goin' ter git me a whip, as yer said yer was?" asked Simple John just then.

"I've been thinkin' it over, an' I reckon it won't be safe ter go out afore dark to-night, John," was the reply. "Can't yer make some kind of rope that'll do ter keep ther gal down? I reckon you're smart enough fur that."

"Oh, yes, I'm smart enough fur that."

Then the foolish fellow who had bound himself body and soul to Montana Mose, it seemed, got a piece of rope and began unraveling and knotting the strands.

"You're makin' a cat-o'-nine tails, I reckon," observed Mose, with a grin. "That oughter keep her straight. But I think it will be a good idea ter tie her up fur ther first day, anyhow. Then she'll be a little bit more humble, mebbe."

"That's right, Mose!" cried the fool.

The two villains at once carried out the suggestion.

Arietta was chained to the wall on the opposite side of the cave, so she could have a chance to stand, sit or lie down, as she saw fit.

Montana Mose gave her a couple of blankets and told her to make herself comfortable.

Young Wild West made up his mind that it was one of the most dangerous situations he had ever been placed in. But the fact that Arietta was there was what worried him.

However, he did not despair of being released.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

It was just getting dark when Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart rode back to the Skull Bone Tavern after a fruitless search for Young Wild West.

They found Anna and Eloise in a great state of excitement.

Arietta had not been seen all the afternoon!

"She went out ter look fur Wild, I s'pose?" said the scout, looking anxious.

"Yes," replied his wife. "She took no one with her, too!"

"Well, that is just like her," spoke up Dart. "But you may depend upon it that one of two things has happened."

"And what are they, Jim?" queried Eloise.

"She has either struck the right trail and is following it, or she has been captured by the same villains that caught Wild."

Charlie nodded.

"I reckon you're right, Jim, he said.

"But she did not take her horse," declared Anna.

"That means that ther galoots is located around here somewhere, then," nodded Charlie. "Jim, we'll have a cup of coffee an' a bite ter eat an' then we'll take a look right around in ther camp. I reckon them two galoots what run away from us this mornin' knows where Wild is."

"Well, if we can only get the miners to believe that way we may be able to get them to confess," was the reply.

It was not much of a supper that any of them ate.

But the coffee Charlie and Jim swallowed nerved them for fresh endeavors, and they struck out to pay a visit to the other drinking places in the camp.

Before going, however, they gave it out at the bar of the tavern that they had strong reasons to believe that the two men known as Butts and De Pew knew where Young Wild West was, and it was not long before quite a number of the miners were aroused against the two men.

Charlie and Jim headed for the lowest resort the first thing.

There was the place they expected to find the two men they had met that morning.

They were not disappointed, either.

Butts and De Pew were there drinking at the bar.

Half a dozen miners followed our two friends into the resort.

They were ready to stand by them.

But Butts and De Pew were on the lookout, it seemed.



They realized that there would be trouble over what had happened that morning, and they were not going to be forced to tell anything if they could help it.

The very minute they saw Charlie and Jim enter they drew their shooters.

Crack!

De Pew fired with remarkable quickness.

The bullet cut a lock of hair from Jim's head and made him feel as though he had been hit.

Crack!

The scout fired and De Pew dropped.

Then Butts made a dash for a rear door.

Neither Charlie nor Jim would shoot the villain in the back, so he got out before he could be stopped.

The two villains had friends, as might be supposed.

Half a dozen rough-looking fellows now had their shooters in their hands.

"Hold on!" cried Cheyenne Charlie. "Put up your shooters. We ain't after any of you galoots. We wanted ther one what dropped an' ther one what's jest got away. Take it easy, won't yer?"

"Ther feller you jest shot was a friend of mine," growled a miner, savagely.

"An' ther feller he come near droppin' is a friend of mine," retorted Charlie, as he leveled his six-shooter at the man. "I mean business! Do you want ter drop, or are yer goin' ter behave?"

The men who had followed our two friends in the place had their revolvers in their hands now, and it looked as though there was going to be a lively time of it.

But more came crowding in, and as the most of them took the side of Charlie and Jim, a fight was averted.

But Butts had been allowed to get away.

That was the worst part of it.

Our friends had intended to follow him, for they felt that he would likely hunt up Montana Mose, if the scoundrel really was anywhere near by.

But now it was too late to get upon his track.

If they had started to leave right after him they would probably have been shot down.

It took several minutes to quiet things down, but even then it was not good policy for Charlie and Jim to leave.

But if they were not able to follow Butts somebody else was.

Hop Wah had begun to grow much worried about the disappearance of Young Wild West and Arietta.

The Chinaman felt that it was now high time that he did something.

So, when he saw Charlie and Jim go to the low saloon, he went over that way, too.

And Carl Metz, for some strange reason, went after him.

In spite of the fact that Hop had won nearly all the money he had, the German had taken a strong liking for him.

The two did not go inside the saloon, but walked around to the side of it and waited to see what the scout and Dart meant to do.

When the shooting took place they ran back toward the rear to be out of the way in case a crowd came out and indulged in a free fight.

The result was that they were just in time to see a man dart from the rear door of the shanty and run across an open space as though his life depended on it.

"Me follee Melican man," said Hop; "he badee Melican man!"

"Shimminny! I vos go mit you already," retorted Carl.

The man they saw running through the darkness was no other than the villain Butts.

As has been stated, Hop Wah was far superior to the general run of his race in shrewdness.

He took it for granted right away that the man was the fellow Charlie and Jim had been after.

The thing now was for him to follow the fellow and see where he went.

Butts never stopped running until he reached the shanty he had occupied with De Pew.

He meant to gather up what few things he possessed and make for the hidden cave.

He knew that De Pew had been shot dead, but there was no help for it, and it made him all the safer, as far as being exposed was concerned.

Only Montana Mose and Simple John knew of the existence of the hidden cave.

Butts ran into his shanty, and when Hop saw him do this it occurred to him that he had better capture the man.

He stole up to the door stealthily, followed closely by the German.

Carl had a revolver in his hand, but it is doubtful if he would have used it if the occasion came.

Butts struck a match to enable him to lay hands upon what he wanted to take with him.

He had left the door partly open as he entered, and, without the least hesitation, Hop stole inside.

"Holdee uppee hands!" he cried, leveling his big six-shooter at the villain.

Butts was thunderstruck.

But he was not going to allow himself to be taken by a Chinaman!

As quick as a flash he dropped to the floor, extinguishing the match at the same time.

He dove between the Chinaman's legs and upset him.

Out of the door he ran and landed plump into the arms of Carl Metz.

But the sudden rush sent the German staggering backward, and he went down as his heel struck a stone, grabbing Butts and pulling him with him.

Bang!

The pistol Carl had in his hand went off without doing a particle of damage to anyone.

But the report frightened him so that he let go of the villain.

Butts scrambled to his feet and was away like a flash.

But he was in such a hurry that he took a direction that was almost opposite to the one he wanted to go.



But there was no choice in the matter now.  
Crack!

Hop came out of the shanty and fired at his retreating form, but missed.

"Come on, Misler Dutcheeman!" he cried.

Carl got upon his feet and started after Hop.

They ran as fast as they could, but the fugitive out-distanced them, and, though they hunted for him for a period of fifteen minutes, they were forced to give it up.

"Me wantee find Misler Wild and Missy Alietta velly bad," said Hop, mournfully. "Me no likee way things is."

"I wish I vos know vot to do already," replied Carl.

"We go backee and tellee Misler Charlie and Misler Jim," said the Celestial, as the thought struck him.

"Dot vos right."

"We tellee 'boutee man runnee outee saloon and comee to um shanty."

"Yah!"

The pair started back for the saloon.

They found Charlie and Jim outside the place with quite a crowd of the miners, who had decided to stick by them and prosecute the search to the end.

Hop quickly called Charlie and Jim and told them what had happened.

"Which way did ther galoot go, Hop?" asked the scout, excitedly, as he caught him by the arm.

"Me showee; comee 'long."

"Boys," said the scout, addressing the crowd, "I reckon we'll run down Butts in putty short order. These two fellers was chasin' him, but they couldn't run fast enough. Come on! When we find him we'll find Montana Mose and ther foolish galoot, too. Them's ther ones what has got Young Wild West and his gal, an' yer kin bet on it!"

A yell of approval went up, and then a dozen or more determined men set out after our friends.

Hop and the German led them to the shanty first and told what had happened there.

Then they started in the direction the fugitive had taken and the country road was scoured.

It was late in the night when the search was abandoned.

But not a trace of Butts could be found.

There were so many places to hide around the mining camp that it was impossible to do much in the dark.

Disheartened, the scout and Jim Dart gave it up for the night and went to the tavern.

It was not the first time that Wild and his sweetheart had been missing, but they felt very bad over it, for all that.

There was more of a puzzle about it this time than there had ever been before, and that was why they felt so dejected.

Hop and the German did not come back with the searching party.

No one knew what had become of them.

But little thought was given to them, for that matter.

Wild and Arietta were the ones to think about.

The whole thing had been talked over by the miners, and

now it was the general opinion that Montana Mose and Simple John had a hiding-place somewhere near the camp, and that in that hiding-place were Young Wild West and his pretty sweetheart.

Many were of the opinion that Wild had been killed by the villain, for they knew that he had been very venomous toward the boy.

But none of them would give that opinion to our friends.

They did not want to alarm them.

Anna and Eloise found a great comforter in the person of Mrs. Sally Goode.

Her husband, too, tried his best to allay the fears of the girls.

But in spite of this they did not sleep that night.

When morning dawned Charlie and Jim were ready to renew the search, and they had plenty to assist them.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE BET THAT HOP MADE.

It will be in order for us to see what became of Hop Wah and the German.

When they found that the search was to be given up for the night they did not go back to the tavern.

The Chinaman had conceived the idea that it was likely that Butts would come back to the shanty.

He told Carl what he thought, and after a short conversation they decided to stop there and see if he did.

So they hied to the shanty and settled down to wait until morning, if necessary.

But they were both tired and sleepy, and it was not long before Carl dropped off into a deep slumber.

Hop yawned and did his best to keep awake, but finally gave in, and he, too, was asleep.

It was just about daylight in the morning when the Chinaman was awakened by the creaking of the shanty door.

It was still dark in the shanty, and as the two had laid down where they were in the shadow they would not be apt to be seen by anyone, unless they came close to them.

Hop was wide awake and clutched his revolver in a jiffy.

He turned his eyes in the direction of the door and saw a man entering.

It was Butts.

The villain cast a quick glance behind him and then walked over to a corner where some clothing was hanging.

He seized the clothing and walked out of the shanty without noticing the two who were lying on the floor.

The moment he had gone Hop got up.

He did not stop to arouse his sleeping companion, but went right out.

It was light enough for him to see the direction the man was taking.

Then it was that Hop Wah brought all his knowledge of woodcraft into play and started after Butts.



Somehow the Chinaman felt exultant.

"Me findee Misler Wild now; and me findee Missy Alietta, too!" he muttered.

It was growing lighter all the time, but when he once got into the woods that covered the ridge at the outskirts of the mining camp he found it quite easy to follow the villain and keep him in view.

Butts had been in hiding all night in the woods.

He had not dared to venture to the hidden cave even.

But when the first signs of the coming day showed up his courage arose.

He felt that he was most likely leaving his shanty for good, so he wanted the clothes he had there.

He wanted them more for what was in them than he did for the garments themselves, since he had his savings in the lining of an old coat that was there.

After thinking it over and looking carefully about he decided to take the risk of going to the shanty.

If he was caught and it came to the worst, he would tell where Montana Mose was hiding.

But not unless it was to save his life would he do this.

Butts was one of the determined sort, who did not believe in going back on a friend.

Montana Mose was his friend, though he had known him but a short time.

He was just the man Butts had long been wanting to fall in with, for all he required was one who could lead, and he would be a regular road agent or common thief.

The villain was in quite an easy frame of mind when he got to the shanty and got the clothing.

But when he left it behind him and reached the cover of the timber he felt better still.

He looked back several times, as might be supposed, but the wily Chinaman was not to be seen.

At length, just as the sun was rising, Butts reached the mouth of the passage that looked to be merely a niche in the face of the cliff.

Once there he paused and looked around him with an air of triumph.

"Now let's see yer catch me!" he exclaimed aloud, shaking his fist at an imaginary pursuer.

Hop Wah was less than a dozen yards from him at the time, and, hearing the words and seeing the move, took it for granted that it was meant for him.

"Me catchee allee light!" he cried, leaping toward the villain; "me showee whattee mattee!"

Butts uttered a startled cry and dove into the passage. Crack!

Hop fired and a bullet whizzed past his ear.

But the scoundrel was at the rock now, and just as the Celestial thought he surely had him, he put his shoulder against it and moved it around sufficiently to get through.

For fear of being shot by the fellow, Hop had drawn a little to one side and he failed to see the move.

The consequence was that when he moved around to look into the niche Butts had disappeared and the rock was in its former place.

"Lat velly muchee funny!" said the surprised Chinaman, staring blankly into the niche. "Badee Melican man go in, but no comee outee; now he gone!"

He waited a few minutes, and then, becoming bolder, stepped into the niche.

But he never once thought of leaning his weight against the rock.

But that was not to be expected of him, since there was nothing about its looks that would indicate that it was movable.

"Velly funny," he mused, over and over again.

It was very mystifying to Hop, even if he was given to performing tricks that were mystifying to others.

But there was one thing certain, and that was he was positive that the man had not come out of the niche.

He meant to stay right there until something happened.

So, keeping his revolver ready for instant use, the Celestial waited.

Patience was a thing that he possessed, and half an hour passed without anything happening.

Still, Hop waited to see Butts appear.

But no Butts came.

Fifteen minutes more slipped by.

Then the Chinaman heard approaching footsteps.

The next minute he saw the forms of Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart approaching.

"Hoolay!" he cried; "me velly glad you comee!"

"What are you doing here, Hop?" asked Dart, in surprise.

"Me comee here 'cause bad Melican man comee," was the reply.

"Butts come here, yer say?" cried the scout, eagerly.

"Yes, he comee light here; me shootee and then he gittee outee sight. He comee light here and no comee out, but he no be found."

Charlie and Jim questioned him sharply and heard just what had happened.

The Celestial was so earnest in declaring that Butts had stepped into the niche and did not come out again that they were forced to believe him, for they knew he was not to be easily deceived.

But it did not take them half a minute to become satisfied that there was no possible chance of a man hiding in the niche.

Finally they came to the conclusion that Butts must have run out of the place unobserved by Hop.

Still it was very puzzling to them.

Then another search was made.

It was over the same ground they had covered before, but they yet had hopes of finding those they were looking for.

They went around the vicinity, as they had done before, walking over the very place where our hero and his sweetheart were confined, but never once did they think of trying to force an entrance through the back part of the niche.

It was impossible for them to reach a spot where they



could look down into the cave through the opening over the chasm.

The narrow ridge before this place was full of jagged and sharp-pointed rocks, and it was impossible for a man to climb up to them.

For over an hour the search was kept up, and at the end of this time they were joined by a party of miners from the camp.

When Jim told them how the Chinaman had chased Butts to the niche and then lost him in such a mysterious way, the miners acted as though they doubted the veracity of the Celestial.

From there they went back to the shanty of Butts.

They found Carl Metz there sound asleep, and this corroborated part of Hop's story.

But when aroused the German declared that he did not know that Hop had left the shanty, much less started in pursuit of the man they had been after.

"Dutcheeman sleepee; me no wakee; me lun after Butts," said Hop. "Me go backee and waitee for um Butts to comee outee."

"That might be a good idea," said Jim. "I don't know what else to do, boys."

Another party of miners came along just then.

One of them was the proprietor of the saloon where the shooting had occurred the night before.

He had declared his willingness to help hunt for Young Wild West and his sweetheart, but there were some who did not believe that he cared much whether they were found or not.

He was simply taking the side of the majority in order to help his business.

And when he turned that way all his followers did likewise, so that left it unanimous.

The man had the name of Morgan Root, and his features were spoiled by an ugly scar that ran across his left cheek.

He heard what Hop said about Butts disappearing when he got to the niche.

"I don't believe a word of it!" he exclaimed. "I wouldn't believe a Chineese, anyway."

"Me no tellee lie!" retorted Hop, showing considerable spirit. "Me bettee five dollee Butts go in lillie place and no comee outee!"

"I'll take your bet, you lyin' heathen. Put up your money!"

"Me puttee uppee in Misler Charlie's hands."

Hop did not stop to think that he would have to prove what he had stated, or else lose the bet; he was mad to think that the man doubted his word, and he had offered to make the bet so he would show that he did not lie.

Morgan Root put five dollars in the scout's hand and Hop covered it, but rather gingerly, for it struck him just then that it was a hard sort of a wager he had made.

"Comee backee to um place," he said.

Our friends knew not what else to do, so they set out with him, all the miners and the German following.

When they reached the niche everything was just the same as they had left it.

Hop explained just how he had followed Butts to the spot, telling it in detail in his pigeon-English, but managing to make the greater part of the men understand him.

Neither Charlie nor Jim took much stock in the man who had made the bet with the Chinaman.

They did not like his way, either.

They were not in the humor to see bets made just then.

But they did not know that the making of that bet was going to solve the mystery for them.

If they had known that they would have hailed it with delight.

Hop thought he had better do something to try and win the money.

He walked into the niche and Root followed him.

"Butts comee light here," he explained. "He shakee fistee at me and callee outee somet'ing velly muchee mad; me lun after him and shootee; len he no be see allee samee smokee go uppee sky!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the saloon man. "What do yer think of that, boys?"

No one said anything.

Hop tried to explain still further, but Root shook his head and declared he had won the bet.

"You no win bettee!" Hop insisted. "You velly muchee lie if you say me lie!"

"Git out, yer yaller galoot!"

As Root said this he gave the Celestial a push that sent him back against the rock that was movable.

The jar was enough to make it move a few inches, and Cheyenne Charlie noticed it.

"Git out of here!" he exclaimed, taking Root by the collar and jerking him from the niche.

Then he pushed hard against the rock and it moved aside, much to the astonishment of all hands.

"Hoolay!" yelled Hop; "me win um bet!"

## CHAPTER XII.

### CONCLUSION.

It was a miserable day and night that Young Wild West and Arietta put in.

Not a bit of food or water was given to our hero, and Arietta refused everything offered her by Simple John except water.

When the first signs of daylight entered the cave through the opening Wild tried to put on a cheerful appearance.

But his lips and throat were parched from thirst, and it was a rather feeble attempt.

Montana Mose was sleeping on the single couch that the cave contained, but Simple John was awake, and had been the whole night long.



"Et," said Wild, looking at his sweetheart, "you must eat what is offered you this morning. You must keep up your strength, for I shall depend on you to save me."

"All right, Wild," was the reply. "But how is it that Charlie and Jim have not found us yet?"

"I don't know. It must be that this is a very secure hiding-place, that's all. But they will find us, and if they don't you must do the work."

Simple John grinned when he heard this.

But he did not act as though he thought it meant anything or not.

Arietta had repeatedly coaxed the fool to give Wild a drink of water, but he had refused every time.

She now tried him again.

"Give him a drink, won't you?" she asked, pleadingly.

"Mose say no, an' it must be that way," was the reply. Then the girl burst into tears.

It was the first time that she had taken on a fit of weeping, and the noise she made aroused Montana Mose from his sleep.

"What's ther matter, little fairy?" he called out, as he got upon his feet. "I reckon you're beginnin' ter give in. Well, I'll tell yer what I'll do with yer! I'll give yer ther liberty of ther cave if you'll promise ter behave yerself."

"I'll promise!" exclaimed the girl, looking at the brute through her tears.

Montana Mose smiled.

"Take ther chain off, John," he said. "But don't let her git hold of a weepin' of any kind. She might kill yer if she did."

"All right, Mose," answered the simple fellow, and then he speedily removed the chain from the girl's waist.

Arietta rushed for her lover the first thing.

But before she could even touch him she was brutally dragged back by the big ruffian.

"None of that, or I'll have ter order ther chain put on yer ag'in," he said.

Arietta realized that she would have to let him have his way if she was to accomplish anything.

So she went to the door and looked out through the rift in the cavern at the reddening east.

She stood there some time debating as to what she should do.

"If I only had a revolver!" she thought.

While she stood there she was suddenly surprised to see a man approaching through the cave.

A thrill of hope shot through her.

Montana Mose rushed to the door.

"Ah!" he exclaimed; "it's Butts, John."

"Yes, it is Butts," answered the simpleton.

"It's me all right," spoke up the newcomer, "but I come mighty nigh not gittin' here. There's a Chinee galoot outside now what's been follerin' me. He shot at me jest afore I fooled him an' got this side of ther swingin' rock."

"You didn't let him see how yer got in here, did yer?" cried Montana Mose, his face paling.

"Oh, no!" was the quick reply. "He got back out of

ther way so I couldn't git a bead on him, I s'pose. Then I come on in."

Butts told what had happened since the morning before, and when he saw Wild and Arietta he nodded approvingly.

"How did yer git 'em here?" he asked, after Mose had done questioning him.

"Oh, I reckon it was putty easy," was the reply, and then the villain related the circumstances.

"Jingo!" said Butts, as he tossed his clothes in a corner; "I had a great time of it, I kin tell yer! I'd have come here last night, only I wanted ter git them clothes."

"Don't look as though they're worth much," observed Mose.

"No, but they've got somethin' in 'em that's worth somethin'. There's about two hundred dollars in that coat."

He picked it up and went through it as he spoke.

"There's ther money," he said, as he took it out and put it in his trouser pocket.

"What's in that little bottle?" asked Mose, pointing to a two-ounce vial that the villain had removed from a pocket of the coat.

"Oh, that's a bottle of laudanum what I keep ter heal cuts an' bruises. It's ther strongest kind, too, an' if a galoot was ter take about a couple of teaspoonfuls of it he'd go ter sleep an' never wake ag'in."

"Well, I reckon I don't want none of it."

"No, nor I, either."

Arietta saw Butts put the vial back in a pocket of the coat and then lay the garment on a stool in a corner.

She had been standing near the door during the conversation trying to get a chance to take a revolver from the belt of Butts.

But she had not been given the least chance to do it.

However, when she heard about the laudanum a thought struck her.

If Montana Mose were to swallow the contents of the bottle it would put him to sleep, if nothing more.

But how could he be made to swallow it?

It seemed utterly out of the question, after all.

"By gracious!" exclaimed Montana Mose, suddenly. "S'pose that Chinee did see ther way yer got in, Butts? Let's go back there an' listen awhile. John, you git ther breakfast ready, an' if ther gal wants ter show that she's goin' ter do ther right thing she kin help yer. But don't let her git hold of even a knife, do yer hear? If she goes over by Young Wild West, git her away from him, if yer have ter knock her down with your fist! She's got ter behave, or else be chained up ag'in."

"I'll behave!" said Arietta, quickly. "Don't let him hit me."

She saw a chance to save Wild and herself, and that was why she spoke in that way.

"You're comin' around all right, I reckon," said the villain, and then he started through that part of the cave where the horses were with Butts.



Simple John piled some faggots on the hearth and lighted them.

Arietta gave Wild a meaning glance and then went over to the simpleton.

"Have you got coffee?" she asked.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Get it, then, and I will make you as fine coffee as you ever drank, and I hope you will give the prisoner there some."

"He can't have any," answered the fool.

He got the coffee and pot to make it in, keeping the girl under his eye all the time.

Arietta took the pot from him, but quickly handed it back again.

"Get some water in it," she said.

In order to do this he was compelled to go out of sight of her for a moment.

The very instant he was out of sight Arietta was at the coat Butts had laid down.

She got the vial from it in a twinkling and was standing over the fire when the simple fellow came back.

Wild knew what his sweetheart was up to, and he could hardly keep from uttering a cry of joy.

The coffee-pot was placed over the fire and was soon steaming away.

It had been boiling about ten minutes when Montana Mose came back alone.

"John," said he, "I reckon there'll be a lively hunt to-day. There's a crowd outside now, but they can't find their way ter git in, though ther Chinees is insistin' that Butts come in ther openin' there an' didn't go out ag'in. What do yer think of that, Young Wild West? Your gang is almost in hearin' of your voice, an' yet they don't know that you're here?"

The villain turned his gaze upon our hero, the fool grinned and Arietta emptied the contents of the vial into the coffee-pot.

Then she took the pot from the fire and stood before the big brute, looking as meek as she possibly could.

"What! Hello! So ther gal is makin' ther coffee fur us, hey, John?" cried the man from the North Woods. "Well, I reckon I'll have ther first cup, then."

John quickly got a tincup that held about a pint and handed it to Arietta.

The girl nervously poured it full of the decoction the pot contained and gave it to Mose.

He sweetened it to his taste and then drank the whole cupful without a stop.

But the peculiar taste must have come out more forcible than before, for he gave a gasp, shook himself and then went over and sat down on the couch, still clutching the tincup.

Wild waited breathlessly. He hardly thought there was enough of the drug in what he had swallowed to kill him, but he knew it would make him drowsy.

The villain got up and came toward the brave girl, who stood with the coffee-pot in her hand.

"What did you give me to drink?" cried Montana Mose.

"Coffee," answered Arietta.

The villain staggered back and dropped the cup.

"You have poisoned me!"

The simple fellow stood still in mute surprise.

"Go an'—an'—fetch Butts!" gasped the villain, as he tried to steady himself.

"I will go! I will be your messenger!" exclaimed Arietta, and as quick as a flash she seized the revolver that was in his belt and leveled it at him.

But like an enraged bull he sprang at her, drawing his bowie as he did so.

"You won't be no messenger, gal!" he shrieked. "This will be your messenger—this knife! An' Young Wild West will git it after you do!"

"No!" shouted Arietta; "the only messenger to be sent here is the bullet in this revolver! It will be a messenger of death, too!"

Crack!

Montana Mose reeled and fell to the floor.

Simple John turned and ran, screaming with terror when he saw his master drop.

"Quick! Get me loose, Et!" said Wild.

But at that very instant the familiar war cry of Cheyenne Charlie rang out, and the next instant the scout appeared at the head of a crowd.

They had found the way inside and arrived at the critical moment.

And the bet Hop had made with the saloon man had been the means of it.

But it is quite likely that Arietta would have succeeded in liberating Wild, anyhow.

A few minutes later Young Wild West, after taking a drink of what seemed to be the sweetest water he had ever swallowed, was walking back to the tavern.

Simple John and Butts were prisoners in the hands of the miners, and they were very much frightened.

With the death of Montana Mose our story comes to an end.

It was Arietta's messenger of death that had done the business, and though both Wild and herself had suffered during the past few hours, they were happy enough after it was all over.

Simple John and Butts were given twenty minutes to get out of the camp, and they went in a hurry.

THE END.

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